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THE HOUSEHOLD OF McNEIL



THE  
HOUSEHOLD OF McNEIL

BY  
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"THE BOW OF ORANGE RIBBON," "A BORDER  
SHEPHERDESS," ETC., ETC.



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# THE HOUSEHOLD OF McNEIL.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE FAMILY OF McNEIL.

Thou huge-heaving sea,  
Thou art speaking to me.  
Ever strong, ever free,  
Is the breath of the sea ;  
Ever rising with power  
To the call of the hour  
Is the swell of thy tides as they flow.

BLACKIE.

Strong are the ties of kindred and long converse.

ÆSCHYLUS.

Each man has some one object of pursuit,  
And lavishes his thoughts delightedly  
On the dear idol.

WORDSWORTH.

THERE had been a glorious sunset, red  
and radiant, floating and flaming above  
the pale gray sea, and the pale gray rocks,  
and the dark islands low-lying amid the waste  
of waters. But as it faded away, the eerie sense  
of the northern night with all its mysteries came  
over the lonely land, and touched the hearts of

the two men who were slowly crossing the Soraba beach, — a firm expanse of the billowy sand, ribbed and water-lined, and which was at this point the “thus far” boundary of the stormy Sound of Jura.

They had been talking with much earnestness, but as the shadows grew darker they spoke in lower tones and at longer intervals; the pauses being fitly filled by the boom of the muffled billows, or the cries of the watchful seabirds, — shrill, unknown, secret cries, lending a weirder meaning to the silence.

They were both noticeable men, and both men of authority in their own sphere. One wore the sombre dress of a Presbyterian minister; the other, a handsome suit of dark brown broadcloth, with a tartan plaid over his shoulders, and a bonnet tipped with an eagle’s feather on his head. The latter was Archibald McNeil, Laird of Edderloch and Otterdale; and his companion was Dugald Brodick, minister in Edderloch, the terror of evil-doers, the friend and helper of all who did well.

As they came nearer to the castle of McNeil, they had to pass through a fishing hamlet. The men in a staid, slow, noiseless manner

were moving toward the boats; the women, standing in the lone doors, watching them with a long, serious gaze.

"The sea is a hard taskmaster, Laird. It canna rest itself, and it gives no rest to those who get their bread on it."

"Just so, Doctor; but the unrest and the salt savour creep into the blood of all who live near by it. And I'm thinking, too, there is in all men a natural yearning for the sea. Once a year, at least, folk want to get a sight of it; ay, and them that never saw it have had very clear notions anent it. I'm thinking now of Shakespeare."

"Well?"

"Well? Who knew it better? And yet, unless it was in his dreams, when did he ever see it?"

"Laird, I'll answer you in the words of a very wise man: —

Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum  
Of things forever speaking,  
That nothing *of itself* will come,  
But we must still be seeking?<sup>1</sup>

Besides, man, God Almighty yet gives to some of us the power of vision, the faculty divine that

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth.

was doubtless lost for the main part in the abyss of the Fall. In all ages, men have seen the sea who never set mortal eyes on it. Where would that auld Arabian Job get a sight of such mountainous billows as come down Jura Sound; or David; or the herdsman of Tekoa; or Jeremiah; or Habakkuk; or any of those Hebrew prophets and poets and preachers? They never saw the Atlantic come thundering down these narrow water-ways; but they had a wonderful clear vision as to how it does it."

"You have made out your case, Doctor, and here we are at the door-stone; will you come in?"

"No; we have talked enough for one night."

He turned away with the words; and McNeil stood a moment watching him descend the little acclivity on which the castle stood. It was not an imposing building, though dignified with the name of "castle;" but its rude strength and square, massive masonry redeemed it from all suspicion of meanness. And it had also the air of antiquity; it looked old, just as an old man has the look of his fourscore years.

The door stood open, and almost involuntarily, as McNeil entered, his eyes sought the quaint



stone letters above it. They always did so; it was a habit which had become a kind of superstition with him, though usually he attached no importance to the declaration which his forefather had put there: "A.D. 1449. I, man, have the end of all wisdom. I trust in God." Hitherto the words had never roused a dissent in his mind. They had seemed to him truthful as words could be. For the first time he felt the chill of some mental antagonism. It was undoubtedly well to trust in God, but was there not also some active and positive thing for him to do? The stir and movement of his century had found him out in the green desert where his ancestors had lived and just let their days come to them.

He had always been a careful and in many ways a very prudent and fortunate man. He had the auriferous touch. All his ventures had ended in gold; and Dr. Brodick had been telling him that night that he was already rich enough, and that the carrying out of certain new plans which he had formed would be apt to bind him to the constant service of Mammon.

He walked through the wide stone hall with a questioning look. Though it was midsummer,

there was a bright fire at the upper end, and a large chair, soft with deer-skins, stood before it. Every night in this cavernous entry the fire was pleasant; this night the chill mist driven up from the sea made it doubly so, but McNeil did not accept the mute invitation of the comfortable chair. He went into a little room diverging from the hall, lighted the candles in a silver sconce, and took from his locked desk a book, which he began to read with profound interest.

It was a stoutly bound book, secured by a brass lock, and was in manuscript. In fact, it was his private ledger. It kept the sum of his gains and the total of his bank account. Its contents seemed to give him much solid satisfaction; and when at length he relocked the volume, and replaced it in his desk, it was with all the careful respect which he considered due to the representative of so many thousand pounds.

His mood was now placid and inclined to retrospection. Thoughtfully fingering the key which locked up the record of his wealth, he walked to the window, drew apart the heavy curtains, and looked keenly into the night. A pale, watery moon was reflected in the sea be-

neath it; and between lights the fishing-boats moved restlessly to and fro. The mountains and moors had now no beauty of colour, — they looked desolate and dreary; but the bare, barren land, and the gray, mournful sea, were fair in McNeil's sight. It was the country of the McNeils. He had a fixed idea that it always had been their country; and when he told himself, as he did at that hour, that so many acres of old Scotland were actually his own, he was aggressively a Scotchman.

“It is a bonnie bit of land,” he muttered; “and I have done as my father, Laird Alexander, told me to do. If we should meet in another world, I'll be able to give him a good account of Edderloch and Otterdale. Thirty years ago, this very night, he gave me the ring off his finger, and said: ‘Archibald, I am going the way of all flesh. Be a good man, and *grip tight*.’ I have done as he bid me. There are £80,000 in the Bank of Scotland, and every mortgage is lifted. I am sure he would be pleased with me this hour, — and indeed I am very well pleased with myself. There is none can say but I have been a good holder of Edderloch and Otterdale. Not one!”

His self-complacent reflections were cut short by the entrance of his eldest daughter, Helen; and he dropped the curtains together, and turned his face toward her. In that moment something finer came into it; the firm, square lower part broke up into lines that almost suggested smiles, and the eyes glinted kindly at her.

"Helen, my bird! I almost missed you, Helen. If I had not had a few very grave thoughts for company, I should have been seeking you ere this. What is that paper in your hand?"

"It is a letter from Colin, I also have had one."

"Whatever news has the lad to need two letters at one post?"

"Only good news, father."

She laid her head against his shoulder with a little caressing motion no other living creature would have ventured upon with McNeil; but to him his daughter Helen was a being apart from common humanity. Not even his youngest child, the beautiful Grizelda, had half the power over him; for Grizelda touched only his fatherly instincts, while Helen appealed also to

everything that was noblest and sweetest in his nature. In Helen's presence he was his best self. She generally managed to leave him on good terms with his conscience, and nothing is more certain than that the average man and woman love those best who insensibly carry them into the finest atmosphere their souls can breathe.

"And what is it about Colin, my dearie?"

"He has written a very fine paper in one of the great reviews, and every one is praising what he says. I do not understand it, but then it must be true, because he proves it all by such clever calculations."

"And if a man can prove his words by figures, Helen, he is apt to be right. There are no flights and fancies about them. You can always tell what you are doing, with figures, Helen. I don't trust much else."

"You never do yourself justice, father. You have something in your soul far above such mechanical things as figures. At the exercise, last night, I shall never forget how your face glowed when you read that wonderful description of the rainbow: 'It compasseth the heaven about with a glorious circle; *and the hands of*

*the Most High have bended it.*' Father, your tone and action made it so real to me that I was constrained to veil my eyes in adoration."

"My dear, I trust I did feel the sublimity of that godlike act," and he looked tenderly down at the fair face bright with that invisible light which comes only from within.

There was a moment's silence, and then Helen said softly, —

"Colin is coming straight home. He will be here by the afternoon packet to-morrow; and he is bringing a stranger with him. Shall I have the best guest-room made ready for him?"

"Whom for?"

"He is an English gentleman from London, — a very good man, Colin says."

"Humph! Would you put an Englishman in the room where a Stuart has slept? I'll not hear tell of it. I am not the man to lift a quarrel my fathers dropped, but I'll not have any English body in the Stuart's room. It's not likely, Helen. What is the man's name?"

"Mr. George Selwyn."

"Selwyn! There's no Scotch Selwyns that ever I heard tell of. He will be Saxon alto-



gether, no doubt. Put him in the east room. I wonder whatever makes our Colin take up with strange men."

"From what Colin says, he is good and he is a gentleman. The McNeil is not used to ask his guest 'Whose son art thou?'"

"Wait a wee, Helen. When the McNeil has two bonnie daughters, it is only right for him to ask questions he would not ask if he had not such a charge; and that minds me of Grizelda. Where is she? I have not seen her or heard her or heard tell of her since the noon hour."

"She was practising all the morning."

"I know that right well. I have surely bought a piano-forte to my own trouble and confusion; for I could not make my counts up for it."

"But, then, in the evening, father! What sweet songs Zelda sings, and how you do enjoy them."

"I am not denying it. Where was she since the noon hour?"

"She went riding, and she met Lord Maxwell, and they took the Bruff road, and got out of the way. She came home a bit tired; but

she is well rested now, and supper will be ready very soon, and you ought to be with us in the parlour, father, — it is lonely without you."

"Helen, there is no use in trying to stay the words that be to come. Listen to them. You are to keep better ward over your sister. I like not Maxwell. He is but a stranger and an interloper here. Let him bide in Galloway, where he comes from."

"Father, have you heard anything wrong of Lord Maxwell?"

"No."

"Have you seen anything wrong?"

"No."

"Why, then, do you think wrong of him?"

"Helen, there are things we know that we cannot comprehend, just as there are things appointed for us that are not explained to us. The first hour that I saw Maxwell, I judged him rightly; and for that reason he dislikes me. I also do not like him. Now, dearie, I will go with you, and we will have a bit of supper and a song."

They went silently through the chill stone passages, and came suddenly into a parlour filled with light and comfort. A bright fire

was on the hearth, and before it, in a low sewing-chair, sat Grizelda McNeil. Her fine face was veiled in a maze of tender thought; her eyes misty with the languorous melancholy of hidden love. It was some moments before she could summon her soul from its intensely personal revery to the simple relative duties and courtesies the hour demanded; but her manner was naturally so reticent and dignified that neither her father nor sister noticed the effort. She had an exquisite face, and a tall and very slender form, and an easy, stately carriage that had in it something maidenly, exclusive, impossible to be described.

Usually, at this hour, she unbent her whole nature to her father and sister. She made it pass to a little flurry of song and gay conversation. She told in it all the news she had gathered in the fishing village, or up among the shepherds on the mountains. She exhibited the sketches she had made, — the bits of wood and moor and sea, the solitary fisherman, the groups of round-eyed, round-faced children. She had a great genius for such sketching, and McNeil was rather proud of her ability. Being a woman, he thought she

had a right to pass the hours in what he considered, after all, a very useless kind of fashion; for pretty, purposeless work was, at that day, the special vocation of wealthy women.

But this night, Grizelda seemed unable to mix her personality with that of others. She was singularly silent, and when asked to sing, did so with an indifference which made McNeil say fretfully, —

“You are giving good music poor justice, Grizelda. You must have been in ill company, for it has taken the song out of your heart. Helen, read me the letter Colin sent you; maybe there will be a bit of kindness and pleasantness in it.”

Colin's letter, however, was no more satisfactory than Grizelda's music had been. It was full of the Rev. George Selwyn; and McNeil found himself anticipating annoyance and disappointment from the visit. In the first place, he had a new business plan to carry out, and he had been waiting nearly a year for the termination of Colin's law studies. He needed his co-operation, and he was impatient of any visitor who would probably prolong the days of unprofitable inactivity.

In the second place, he was intensely jealous of Helen; and every young man, in his eyes, was a probable suitor. For a few years, he wished to retain her by his own side and at his own hearth; and when the question of her marriage had to be faced, he had quite determined to give her to his nephew and elected heir, Colin McNeil. He had adopted the young man at his brother's death; and though the estate was not entailed, it was a tacitly understood thing that Colin would be the future McNeil. And a decided part of this scheme, in the laird's eyes, was the marriage of the heir to his own eldest daughter. There seemed such an element of justness and fitness in this arrangement, it was so clear to his own mind, that he never anticipated opposition or dissent in the matter; so he could not think with patience or pleasure of any element coming into McNeil Castle which might be a disturbing one to plans so well considered and satisfactory.

But with the morning light, he faced the circumstances more hopefully. "There are mostly two good sides to one bad one," he thought. "It will be an ill man that is not better than Maxwell. Grizelda thinks she is

in love with him, because he has the ground to himself in a manner; and if this stranger can only make her waver, there will be time gained: and with time on his side, a man may hope for all things. And it is not likely Helen will take a thought anent him. Her heart is with her own people; and if she knows anything well, she knows that Colin McNeil and Helen McNeil are sorted out for each other. She never has gone contrary to my wish; it's no likely she will begin wrong-doing with an English stranger."

So, confiding in his own wishes and opinions, he went in high spirits to meet his nephew and his guest. He had not seen Colin for three years, and the young man was an object very near to his heart, — his nephew, his intended son-in-law, and the inheritor of lands and honours stretching backward into the mists of Ossianic traditions, and forward into the hopes and ambitions of an era whose possibilities were almost too large to dream about.

As the packet approached the small pier, he was sensible of some anxiety regarding the young man's personal appearance. The McNeil's were a handsome race; he hoped that



Colin would be physically worthy of his ancestors. And he drew a long sigh of gratification as the young man, with outstretched hands, leaped from the boat to meet him; for the future McNeil was certainly a proper Highland gentleman, — tall and swarthy, with the glowing eyes and rather melancholy air of the true Celt.

His companion, the Rev. George Selwyn, was singularly unlike him. The McNeil had judged rightly; he was a pure Saxon, and he showed it in his fresh complexion, his fearless, wide-open, gray eyes, and his bright brown hair. But as it was only physically that McNeil looked at him, he was not at all conscious that there was something in George Selwyn which struck a deeper and wider sympathy than the sympathy of race, — a heart beating for all humanity.

“There is no danger with the like of him,” was McNeil’s mental comment as he glanced with satisfaction at the young clergyman’s short spare figure and well-defined, educated face. “I need not fear for Helen. Colin is six inches taller, and every way a far prettier man.”

## CHAPTER II.

### A DAY OF EARTH'S UNREST.

His doctrines from the streets he brings,  
From ploughman's lowly cot,  
From proud palatial halls of kings,  
From dens where sinners rot  
In darkness and disease. He hath  
The wise man's art to borrow  
From other's life ; he treads the path  
Of each man's joy and sorrow.

DR. BLACKIE.

Sing of the nature of women, and then the song shall surely be full of variety, old crotchets, and most sweet closes.

MCNEIL had anticipated no interference of any kind from a man of such insignificant presence as George Selwyn ; but in three weeks his influence had become remarkably dominant. When he first arrived, the laird, out of respect for his office, had delegated to him the conduct of the family worship. His own " exercises " had often been slipped away from, excuses had been frequent, absentees usual ; but the whole household came to listen

to Selwyn with an eagerness which was very irritating to McNeil.

And both the laird and his servants heard some startling truths; for the Gospel of Christ, interpreted as the gospel of humanity, bringing forth free schools, free hospitals, food for the hungry, clothes for the naked, homes for the homeless, helps of all kinds, as part of every church organization, was in that day strange doctrine. It was struggling for a hold in the great cities; country parishes had never heard of it.

McNeil listened with indignation. He thought it very ungentlemanly of Selwyn to preach at him in his own house, and he by no means approved of the responsibilities which the young preacher assigned to men of wealth and authority. A religion of intellectual faith, which had certain well-recognized claims on his pocket, he was willing to support, and if need were to defend; but one which made him on every hand his brother's keeper, — that was a different thing; he considered it a dangerously democratic theology.

“And I'll have no socialism in my religion any more than I'll have it in my politics,

Colin," he said one morning angrily. "If this friend of yours belongs to what they call the Church of England, I am more set up than ever with the Kirk of Scotland, God bless her!"

"The same ideas are spreading in the Kirk of Scotland, uncle. When I was in Edinburgh, I went with Selwyn to some ragged schools just founded by our own great Dr. Guthrie. Selwyn was talking to me of what might be done among these poor kinsmen of ours."

"No doubt; but I'll no need Mr. Selwyn to help me to order my affairs. He may have a big parish in London, but the McNeils are not in his congregation. You can tell him, Colin, that I am a king and bishop within my own bounds."

He reached down his bonnet as he spoke, and without waiting for Colin's answer, walked rapidly to the beach. The salt coolness of the air, the fresh sea-weeds glistening with olive fronds and black sea-grapes, the sand-snipes piping to one another across the sands, the peregrines screaming at and scolding him as they rose from their rock,—all these things comforted him in their way. They were fa-

miliar; there was no element of change about them; they seemed to assure him that, in his world at least, as things had been, so they would continue to be.

But the morning was destined to be one of annoyance to him. On his return homeward he met Dr. Brodick. The minister had seen him coming, and he stood waiting his approach on the wet sands. He had lifted his hat to catch the cool breeze, and his tall, sombre figure imparted to the majesty of Nature the nobler majesty of humanity. The wide expanse of beach looked grander for the man standing on it.

"Well met, Doctor. Are you going to the castle?"

"Even so. I am for an hour's talk with that fine young English minister you have staying *at* with you."

"Brodick, let me tell you that you have been too much with him lately. His sermons on the beach the two last Sabbath nights havena given satisfaction. There is a kind of papistical sensation in preaching outside of the kirk."

"But, Laird, the kirk would not hold the congregation; and as for preaching out of doors,

the Great Preacher aye did it. You will surely not be accusing Him of sensation and papacy."

"Things were fit for Him that are not to be thought of with the life of George Selwyn. The kirk is the place for men to preach. Why, Doctor, he is an Episcopal and an Arminian of the worst kind. I'm more than astonished at you listening to him at all."

"Tuts, Laird! Arminianism isna a contagious disease. I'll no more take Arminianism from George Selwyn than I'll take toryism and Jacobitism from Laird Archibald McNeil. My theology and my politics, both of them, are far beyond inoculation."

"Have you gotton up an argument with him, Brodick? I'd like fine to hear you two at it."

"No, no; Selwyn is not inclined to argue. He makes downright assertions, and every one of them hits my conscience like a sledge-hammer. He said that to me last night, as we walked these sands together, that has not let me sleep a blink."

"He is a very disagreeable young man. What could he say to you? You have aye done your duty."

"I thought so once, McNeil. I taught the

bairns their catechism; I looked well after the spiritual life of both old and young; I have had a word in season for all. But this I ought to have done, and not left the other undone."

"You are talking foolishness, Brodick; and that is a thing not usual with you."

"Not oftener than with other folk. But, Laird, I feel that there must be a change. I have gotten my orders, and I am going to obey them. You may be very certain of that."

"I never thought that I should live to see Doctor Brodick taking orders from a disciple of Arminius — and an Englishman, forbye."

"I'll take my orders, McNeil, from any messenger my Master chooses to send them by; and I'll do His messenger justice. He laid down no law to me. He only spoke of the duty laid on his conscience; but my conscience said amen to his. That is all about it. There have been great questioning and seeking lately among the men at Oxford; and though I don't agree with them in all things, I can see that they have gotten a kind of revelation."

"Humph! It is aye the young men that want to turn the world upside down. Nothing as it is suits them."

“Laird, it is like a new epiphany. The hungry are fed, the naked clothed, the prisoners comforted, the poor wee bairns gathered into homes and schools. It is the gospel with bread and meat and shelter and schooling in its hands. And while he was telling me about these things, my ain heart burned. I bethought me of all that could be done right here in Edderloch.”

The laird had listened thus far in speechless indignation. He now stood still, and said, “I’ll have you to understand, Doctor Brodick, that I am laird of Edderloch and Otterdale, and that I will have no new-fangled ways or doctrines taught in either of my clachans.”

“If you are a laird, I am a dominie. You know me well enough, McNeil, to be sure if this thing is a matter of conscience with me, no laird can stop me. I would snap my fingers in the face of any one who said to me, ‘Stop,’ when my conscience said to me, ‘Go on;’” and the doctor accompanied the threat with that sharp, resonant fillip of the fingers which is a Scotchman’s natural expression of intense excitement of any kind.

“Brodick, you are in a temper. You will be sorry for it ere long. You have given way



more than I have. You ken how you feel about it."

"I feel ashamed, Laird. You'll no lay the blame to my office, but to Dugald Brodick himself. There is a deal of Dugald Brodick in me yet; and whiles he is too much for Dominie Brodick to manage."

They were at the door by this time, and the laird said, "Come in, Doctor."

"No; I'll go home now, and give myself a talking to; forbye, I see Mr. Selwyn is in the garden with Helen, and I'll perhaps spoil a better talk."

The words struck McNeil with a singular force. His face flushed angrily as he turned it toward the shady walk which traversed the garden, and then meandered through the little pine wood bordering the sweet place, and into which, indeed, the garden strayed. Acting upon the impulse of the moment, he walked rapidly toward them.

"Helen, you are needed in the house," he said abruptly; and then, turning to Selwyn, asked, "Will you walk a while with me in the wood, Mr. Selwyn?"

The young man pleasantly complied. He

was quite unconscious of anger in the tone of McNeil's request. And for a few yards neither spoke; then the laird, with an irritable glance at his placid companion, said, —

“Mr. Selwyn, fore-speaking sometimes saves after-speaking. I may as well tell you that my daughter Helen is intended for the wife of my nephew Colin. If you are thinking of wiving in my house —”

“Laird, I thank you for your warning; but I have no thought of marrying any one. Helen McNeil is a pearl among women, but I should not dare ask her to be my wife. Even if I desired such a great honour, she would not be able to endure the labour and the surroundings to which I am pledged heart and soul. When I took a curacy in the East-end of London, I counted all the cost; and not for the fairest of the daughters of men could I desert the work to which I have solemnly pledged myself.”

McNeil was intensely mortified. He had simply put it in the power of a poor preacher, and an Englishman, to refuse his daughter, — his Helen, whom he secretly regarded as a being too good for any man's love or care but his own. It did not help to conciliate him that

Selwyn passed over the conversation as if it had been the most unimportant of episodes. And McNeil was one of those men who, while they are capable of overlooking great wrongs, are made implacable enemies by a slight insult. For the dagger's thrust may be forgiven, but the slap in the face, never! The pain of the one is tolerable: the humiliation of the other intolerable. And Selwyn's calm disclaimer had been felt by McNeil to be an affront of the most insufferable kind.

The great pride of his character saved him from the petty retaliation of impertinence; he listened with a semblance of perfect courtesy to Selwyn as he proceeded to describe the abject poverty and the degradation of the people among whom he had elected to live. He was even just enough to acknowledge to himself that the young man was a sincere enthusiast, an apostle filled with his own evangel.

Yet never in his whole life had he spent a more humiliating and disagreeable half-hour, and he was exceedingly grateful when Colin pushed aside the tall brackens, and leaping the stone wall of the plantation, joined them. And the young man's dark, vivid beauty, his supple,

graceful figure, his world-like words and manner made him, in the laird's eyes, a delightful contrast to the pale, spiritual visionary who had so deeply mortified him.

He left Colin and Selwyn together, and returned home in a hurry of mingled annoyance and irritability. The men in the garden took offence because he passed them without a word; the men in the courtyard, because he spoke to them in tones of most unaccustomed and undeserved anger. He went to his own parlour, and locked himself in. His coat and necktie oppressed him; he threw them off with a passionate exclamation of chagrin. For a few minutes he permitted himself a full and adequate expression of the storm raging within him.

Ah! the worst of all wounds are those which our own hands inflict. Though the sun was shining brightly, the laird sat in his own shadow; and the future seemed to him full of those fearsome phantoms that haunt darkness of any kind. He remembered now how much Helen and Selwyn had been together, how often he had seen them so eager in conversation that their very walk was but a shadow of movement,

coming often to a positive standstill. Was it credible they were only discussing the needs of poverty and ignorance, and the best methods of relieving them? He called himself the hardest of all names for his credulity, for his carelessness, for his wrong estimate of his daughter's character.

"I might have known Helen better! I might have been sure that Colin, with all his beauty and his full height, would be nowhere beside that little saint fighting the Devil and all his works. Helen is n't like other women, and I should have had more sense than even her with them. But I'll tell her what he said. If she has any hopes of martyrdom with George Selwyn, I'll let her ken that he does not need her company. It's a brutal thing to do; but there's hurts for which the knife is the only kindness."

Having partially allayed this annoyance by deciding how it was to be conquered, he began to trouble himself about Grizelda. His antipathy to Lord Maxwell was a sincere one, none the less vigorous in its nature because there was no apparent reason for it. And he felt certain that Grizelda liked him; equally certain

that Grizelda's reputed wealth was the object of Maxwell's desires. He would not permit himself to suppose that Maxwell was under the influence of a sincere affection.

"And Grizelda is as proud and self-willed as her mother was," he muttered; "what she wants she'll take and have, if it is within the bound of mortal capacity to win at it. Preserve me! To be between two daughters is to be between two fires. I do not feel as if it was right for the Almighty to set a man more than one woman at a time to guide. I have had three," he added, mournfully; "my wife Grizelda—Heaven give her rest!—and the two girls she left in her place. Dear me! I am afraid they have been given for my heartache."

With two such worries on hand, a man may torment himself indefinitely; and in suspicions and suppositions, all alike full of disappointment and sorrow, the laird let the whole afternoon pass away. Twice some one had gently tried the door, and finding it locked, gone away. He knew it was Helen. He knew that she would be uneasy about his fasting and his long seclusion; but it was not until the sun began to wester that he felt any inclination, or

indeed any ability, to face the domestic duties that belonged to him.

And after all it was the physical sensation of hunger that first brought his rebellious soul to listen to reason. The tinkling of the glass and china was like a soothing voice to him. "I'll have to go to the dinner-table," he thought; and the thought was not now unpleasant. He remembered the lordly salmon that had been brought from the loch that morning, and the saddle of mutton and the sweetmeats, and his after-dinner tranquillizer, — the hot glass of fine Campbeltown, with the slow pipe of Virginia tobacco.

These were real and tangible pleasures. He was now prepared to let them banish the unpleasant uncertainties which had been employing him. And just at that moment the door-handle moved softly again, and he hastened to turn the lock and give the delayed words of permission, "Come in."

No sweeter form could have answered the words. Strictly speaking, Helen was not as beautiful as her sister Grizelda; but her face was fair and pleasing, and luminous with a clear and limpid soul such as God loves. Her dress



of rich silk was quite destitute of the usual *fla-fla* of an evening toilet; her manner full of simplicity and a natural candour. Hope and happiness came back to McNeil's heart as soon as he looked at her; and in the first moment he felt as if it would be simply impossible and inexcusable to annoy her with his own annoyance.

But self-seeking, and not self-sacrifice, is the natural bent of man. When Helen's hand was in his, when he heard her say, "The day has been so dreary without you, father; and I missed you so much at the lunch-table; and, dear, you look as if you were in trouble;" he could not resist the craving for her sympathy.

"I made a big blunder, Helen; and because it was about you, my bird, I have had a double portion of shame anent it."

Then he repeated the conversation which had taken place between Selwyn and himself; perhaps unconsciously softening his own warning and strengthening the positiveness of Selwyn's declaration.

No mortal could know how bitterly Helen felt the position in which she had been placed. In that moment she realized, for the first time,



that Selwyn had been something more to her than a passing visitor. She had not certainly admitted the thought of love in her heart, but she had idealized the man; and the conditions of love were all present. A word, a sigh, a glance might at any moment have kindled a flame, holy and inextinguishable, in her pure heart. It was as if the door into some grand temple had been set open, and then, while her foot was on the threshold, suddenly closed in her face. Many words and incidents flashed across her memory which, once so pleasant, now made her cheeks burn, and her heart turned sick with shame.

But to blame her father would do no good, and she hastened to say the words which at the moment seemed most likely to prevent any suspicion of her own heart-trouble.

“Mr. Selwyn cares not for any woman, father; and I think, besides, Colin will have told him that — that I am —”

“To be Colin’s wife, surely, Helen, in a few years, my dear. There is no hurry. Colin must travel a year or two first; see the world. All young men ought to; and he knows I want no forwardness in this matter. There is no

sense in forcing life on. A man should take things in their order, — his education, then his profession, syne, when he is wearied himself with strange countries and strange people, his ain folk, and his ain home. I am in no hurry to give anybody a share of your love, Helen."

What could Helen do but clasp his hand tightly, and with a kiss, give him once more the assurance of her own faithfulness, and of her contentment in his will.

But though the laird was partially restored to himself, the evening was not by any means concordant. Every one was conscious of an undertone that was not harmonious; and Helen was almost troubled by a tenderness and attention in Colin's manner much more marked than usual. She wondered if her father had also spoken to Colin. She felt resentful of such open discussion of herself, and the unexpressed feeling imparted a certain dignity to her manner.

But the change in Colin had not originated with the laird. Mr. Selwyn was accountable for it. While they were in the wood together, he had thought it best to tell Colin of McNeil's suspicion; and in the conversation growing out

of this confidence, Selwyn had spoken of Helen's spiritual and personal beauty in words which had aroused all the latent jealousy of Colin's nature. He saw and felt, what was possibly not clear to Selwyn, that the young preacher was far more under the sweet influence of Helen McNeil than he was aware of; and while he was satisfied that Selwyn had no thought of being unfaithful to his convictions or his friend, he was secretly angry at the unconscious infidelity.

And so subtle and unconfirmed are the springs that move us to action, that Selwyn felt in that moment that his visit was over; that he had got the call to go back to London and to work. He did not hesitate a moment, and Colin was a little ashamed of himself because he found it impossible to urge his friend with any warmth or sincerity to extend his visit. Still he made the attempt. "Stay a week longer and I will go as far as Glasgow with you," he said.

"No, Colin, I have done the work I was sent to do. The ground is broken. I can trust the seed-time and harvesting to that good Doctor Brodick and to your cousin Helen."

"Then you think you came here on a special mission, Selwyn?"

"I trust that I go nowhere with aimless feet. There was a word to be spoken here, and God sent me to speak it. The word has fallen on good ground; you will see that. But to-morrow morning I must go. I am sure it is right to do so."

Colin no longer opposed. Perhaps he was even a little glad. He had been impressed by the spiritual heroism of this new band of evangelists; but his enthusiasm lacked the strength of continuity. A little good done now and then, a holy Sabbath to savour the week: that was salt enough for life, as Colin looked at life. A conviction which drives like rain, to the very roots, was too hard for him.

And then he had suddenly become jealous. Selwyn spoke of Helen too familiarly, too admiringly. He felt sure of her sympathy. He relied upon her to carry out the charities he had planned; made a claim, as it were, upon her life and remembrance. Without consciously analyzing these feelings, he was moved by them; and their first result was that access of attention and tenderness which had half offended Helen.

As for McNeil, he grandly put behind him

all considerations but the fact that Selwyn was his guest. Every tradition, every inherited feeling, led him to set this duty first of all; but there was undoubtedly an effort in it, and the entrance of Doctor Brodick was sincerely welcomed. He speedily claimed Selwyn's attention, and left to the laird and to Colin and to Helen the less trying position of listeners.

Grizelda had never affected the slightest interest in Mr. Selwyn or his theories. She said that his enthusiasm had even a chilling effect upon her. So she sat at the piano, softly practising with one hand a brilliant fantasia of Henri Herz's; but its sweet crescendos did not seriously command her attention,—the running music was only an accompaniment to dreams and hopes of a far more personal character.

Gradually the voices of Selwyn and Brodick became softer and yet more earnest; and Helen sat with her crochet in her hand, listening to them, her fine, sensitive face expressing her assent far more eloquently than words could have done. The laird smoked, and thought his own thoughts. Colin, standing by the open window, put in a word now and then, and watched Helen's face furtively, as his eyes wan-

dered between the speakers and the misty mountains; and over all the evening shadows gathered, gray and solemn, and the parlour seemed strangely quiet, in spite of the serious voices and the soft, tinkling music.

Suddenly the door was hastily opened, and the footman said in a voice of suppressed excitement, —

“Hector Oe would speak with you, Laird.”

McNeil rose in a moment, with a face full of alarmed expectation. Hector Oe was his head shepherd; and any unusual visit from him generally portended some calamity among the flocks. Doctor Brodick understood this; he rose and stood by the side of Colin. Selwyn bent forward and spoke to Helen. Grizelda’s soft, aimless playing went on without a break.

In a few minutes McNeil re-entered the room. He was trembling with passion; he could scarcely command his voice as he said, —

“Doctor, Colin, those dogs of Maxwell’s have worried to death more than two score of my best ewes.”

“It is an outrageous shame,” answered the minister. “They have already done great damage to the flocks on the Greenlees estate. I

heard that Greenlees was suing him for the price of two thousand sheep."

"I will not trouble the law. I will be my own judge and jury in this matter. I have bid Hector Oe shoot the brutes, and then hang them on Maxwell's gate-posts."

Grizelda had stopped playing when McNeil first spoke; at these words she rose, and coming forward into the clearer light, said, —

"You have given a most ungentlemanly and unwise order, father. It is Hector Oe's fault. What are shepherds for but to protect the sheep?"

Her father heard her with amazement which had no words, and Doctor Brodick answered for him.

"You do not know what you are talking about, Grizelda. Maxwell is quite aware of the vice which these brutes practise. He has been kindly remonstrated with, for I went myself to him; he has been asked to keep them, at least, within his own bounds. He ought to destroy them."

"A man has a right to keep the dogs he prefers. He does not interfere with those which you or my father keep."

“He has no such right, Grizelda. In a community of sheep-owners, a dog that worries sheep —”

“Doctor, Grizelda knows what is right. Out of a wicked perversity she speaks. Go to your own room, miss, till you can find a better cause to espouse than that of two vicious dogs and their hound of a master.”

“Lord Maxwell is not a hound.”

“He is the worst hound of the three. I will not have another word from you, Grizelda;” and McNeil himself set wide the door, and imperiously ordered the contumacious girl through it.

This event impressed every one with a sense of finality: the life embodied in the past few weeks was a finished scene; the actors in it had now new parts to fill. Mr. Selwyn went away with less regret than he would have thought possible twenty-four hours previously; for McNeil, Colin, and even Doctor Brodick were heartful of the malicious injury perpetrated on the old lairds of the land by a stranger, a borderer, almost an Englishman.



## CHAPTER III.

### A SECRET LETTER AND ITS ISSUES.

Oh, what a tangled web we weave  
When first we practise to deceive!

A man with all the bad qualities his language has names for.

Look round the habitable world, how few  
Know their own good, or, knowing it, pursue!

So blind we are, our wishes are so vain,  
That what we most desire proves most our pain.

DRYDEN.

GREAT were the needs of the present time; they made their demands first, and in their attack, so surprising and so blunt, men forgot all about the future, its lofty ideals and its beneficent plans.

Grizelda obeyed her father because the powers present were too much for her to resist; but she was intensely angry, and her anger did not evaporate in a few indignant tears and words. Indeed, she never thought of weeping. Her first act on reaching her room was to write a

note which she sent by her maid to Lord Maxwell. She was especially anxious to prevent any positive quarrel between him and her father; and she knew if the McNeil's orders were carried out no future reconciliation was possible.

Hitherto Maxwell's admiration for Grizelda McNeil had been shown within legitimate and honourable bounds. In the houses of the neighbouring gentry, when he met her, he chose to linger by her side, to walk with her in the gardens, to make her conspicuously his partner in the dance. Grizelda was fond of riding, and it happened, perhaps with some vague understanding of its likelihood, that their paths were often identical. And there had been at these times such love-making as naturally comes to pass when youth and beauty and inexperience are at the mercy of a handsome man, skilled in all the ways of selfish gratification.

For undoubtedly Maxwell was handsome. He had an aristocratic bearing, a manner at once suave and authoritative, and a face of perfect regularity; but it was a face without a heart,—a face that might have been carved from steel, so fine and yet so cold was it. The eyes never laughed when the man laughed; and

their glance, unsteady, piercing, obtrusive, left an unpleasant impression of something that was almost insolence.

McNeil had disliked him on sight. At first he tried to reason himself out of such an unreasonable prejudice; but the toleration granted to the absent Maxwell was instantly withdrawn when he met him face to face. Finally he became aware that the aversion was not to be eradicated any more than it was to be understood. "Our souls are at enmity," he said to Doctor Brodick; "they do not believe anything our tongues say."

This was the state of feeling between McNeil and Maxwell on that night when Grizelda took her first wrong step. When her father sent her from his presence, she opened her heart to every evil power. Impulse is generally the Devil's own whisper; and she followed her first impulse, which was to write and tell Lord Maxwell of the intention of "certain parties" respecting his offending dogs. Had she waited an hour, she would have written a far less effusive note; had she waited until morning, she would not have written at all.

Lord Maxwell was alone when he received it.

He had been sipping wine, and turning the leaves of one of Sue's novels for a couple of hours, and was precisely in the mood to find in Grizelda's note the very stimulus his nature wanted. His first step was to secure his dogs. To have them shot and hung at his gates would be an intolerable insult, because it was one which he could not avenge. The law would give him no redress, he could not enter into a quarrel with servants, and, as he admitted to himself, servants of such gigantic stature and strength that they had immense physical advantage over him. Well, then, as he was unable to strike, it was better not to lift his hand; and he said with a hateful little laugh as he tapped the table with Grizelda's note, —

“I thank you, miss, for keeping me out of this trap, and for showing me the way to a far sweeter revenge.”

For Grizelda's interference said plainly that he had won the girl's heart; and though he felt a slight scorn for his easy conquest, he perceived that it put the father's heart under his feet. The possibilities of his plan, though as yet complicated and confused, were certain enough to give him, in anticipation, an intoxi-

cating draught of the sinful triumph he felt certain of.

He had a shrewd idea as to where he would be likely to meet Grizelda next day; and he lingered near the spot for hours. But though Grizelda had precisely the same thought, though she was certain he was slowly riding up and down that part of the moor which touched the wall of the fir wood, and momentarily expecting her to emerge from its green depths, Grizelda did not keep this mental tryst. She wished to do so, but some womanly instinct made it impossible. She was naturally a very proud girl, and at this hour her pride stood her in the place of nobler sentiments. She felt keenly that she had forfeited something that belonged to the finest conception of womanhood in writing to Maxwell, and she could not delude herself with the idea that she had done so to prevent quarrelling, perhaps bloodshed.

So, as a kind of peace-offering to her wounded self-respect, she did not go to walk in the fir wood. She even compelled herself to remain in her own room, lest the exquisite weather might tempt her into the garden, and her weak heart tempt her into the wood.

But Maxwell gave her no credit for this self-denial. He understood women so well that he had been over the whole ground of Grizelda's feelings and reasonings before he left his own house, and had even taken a bet with himself that she would not come to meet him. Her absence gratified his opinion of his own penetration, but still it did not please him. Having taken one step aside from the narrow, conventional road, he would really have respected her more if she had dared to do what he knew her heart prompted her to do, and have thus given to his wooing something piquant and unusual.

He smiled as he turned homeward.

"She will meet me to-morrow, perhaps; but if it be a week, — a month hence, — in the long run it will be the same."

He was thinking such thoughts when he met Doctor Brodick. He stopped his horse and spoke to him with the utmost respect, carrying the conversation from one topic to another with great tact and volubility. But the doctor was not deceived by his clever suavity, and he met it by that blunt honesty which always confounds speech used for deception.

"Lord Maxwell," he said, "I have been to

your place to seek a word with you. I may as well say it here. There is a very ill will to you in the country-side anent those vicious curs that are worrying the flocks around Edderloch. I have spoken to you before about it. Keep those dogs up, my lord, and you will save yourself a deal of trouble."

"Doctor Brodick, I am sorry you have interfered in this matter. I do not recognize your right to do so."

"Edderloch is my parish, Maxwell. It is my duty to reprove wrong in it, whether the wrong-doer be lord or shepherd. You are a stranger in these parts, Lord; but let me tell you that the thing you are responsible for is an outrage not to be tolerated in a community where sheep are a man's main property."

"Doctor, you have done your duty then; let me say you are a trifle late about it. A much more persuasive tongue than yours has already counselled me. If it will give you any satisfaction, I will admit that I have listened to the voice of the charmer, and confined the objectionable animals. Have you been at the castle to-day? I hope the McNeils are all well. Good evening, Doctor." And putting spurs to



his horse, he rode off with the air of a man who had not only cleared himself, but also administered a well-deserved rebuke in a very reasonable manner.

For a moment the minister was in a blaze of anger, and his first impulse was to lift the stout thorn stick in his right hand; but instead he struck it firmly into the yielding turf. "Keep yourself in hand, Dugald Brodick," he said sharply; "keep yourself in hand! Are you going to sin because an ill man tempts you?" For a few minutes the spiritual struggle was as intense as it was silent and motionless; then his lips began to move, his large, gray eyes were uplifted, he whispered softly, as he resumed his walk, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee! Perfect peace! Nothing half-way, nothing incomplete in that promise. Take hold of it, Dugald Brodick!"

For a short time he walked rapidly, but it was not long ere he regained that absolute personal controul which his usual thoughtful pace and calm countenance indicated. Then he began to speak to himself in a remonstrative tone: "Dugald, to be possessed of the Devil



is a bad thing, but I'm doubting whether it is as bad as to be possessed of yourself. Dugald Brodick knows Dugald Brodick so well that he has advantages even Satan has not. Dugald Brodick possessed of Dugald Brodick would be a sinner set upon a hill. Only Christ in him could cast out that tyranny."

The imperative personal conflict over, he began to reflect upon Maxwell's peculiar words. Connecting them with Grizelda's intemperate action of the previous night, he was at no loss to divine the charmer whose voice had been listened to. But the conviction gave him a heartache. Grizelda, with all her faults, was very dear and pleasant in his sight. She had been born shortly after the death of his own young wife, and he had taken to her, and found comfort in her caresses, and had her much with him all through her babyhood and girlhood. He had felt a pride in her beauty and talents, and been very tolerant to the high temper and lofty will, in which he recognized a spirit very kindred to his own natural disposition.

The next morning he made an opportunity to speak to his favourite. She was by this time in a mood to listen. A little shame for her own

action, a little regret for her treachery to the sacredness of home confidence, a dim knowledge in her own soul that she was in danger, aided by the physical depression consequent on intense emotion and sleeplessness, all combined, made Grizelda unusually gentle and reasonable.

"He is the very worst sweetheart you could pick out, my dear," said the minister, kindly; "he can make you 'my lady' surely, but he is not as rich nor as good a man in any respect as young Finlay, of Finlay Steppe, who would be proud indeed if you but looked at him. Finlay is a Highland gentleman, at home here before ever an Englishman crossed the border. Maxwell is nothing but a stranger; he only got a footing in Knapdale by buying your far-off cousin's property, when the poor laird was in a trouble he could not sort."

"There was nothing wrong in that. Malcolm McNeil wanted to sell."

"I am not saying it was wrong; but, Grizelda, there is a great prejudice against Lord Maxwell, and there are causes for it. A man that regards not the rights of his fellow-men is not likely to obey the commands of God; and if a man

has no fear of God before his eyes, how can a woman trust her life with him? ”

“ I think Lord Maxwell loves me.”

“ A man that loves not God loves not either man or woman rightly. He is not to be depended upon. He goes out with the tide, and comes in with the tide, and never puts out an anchor, or grips tight to any single principle of justice or human kindness. I would not trust my life with a godless man any more than I would trust my life in a fisher’s cobble without sail or oar.”

“ You are correcting me in advance of my fault, Doctor,” answered Grizelda, fretfully. “ Lord Maxwell has not asked me to trust my life to him; and if he did, there are many things to consider. I suppose, for instance, my father would go into a passion about it, and Helen would look heart-broken, and cousin Colin would fume about the family honour as if he was a son of the family.”

“ My lassie, take care of your words! You have no right to criticise your father, even in your thoughts; and the fleck at your Cousin Colin is not kind-like nor woman-like.”

“ I think a prejudice ought to give way be-

fore a good reason; and when a girl's happiness is at stake — ”

“Happiness! happiness! What is happiness, Grizelda? What is it? Gratified self-love! Take my advice: go and do your work and play your piano, and don't sit idle planning deceit and wrong. Evil thoughts are almost evil beings. The minute you conceive a wrong thought, you give it form; and it is not in human nature to conceive evil without, at the same time, rousing the desire to carry that evil into reality. Don't say, as so many young girls do: ‘My thoughts are my own!’ They are not your own! If they are not innocent thoughts they are the Devil's, and bound to do him service.”

“What have I done? You are reproving me without cause.”

“Without cause! Did you not betray the purpose of your father's house to his enemy?”

It was a question based upon Lord Maxwell's words, and the minister asked it with a heart fearful of her acknowledgment.

“I did so for a good reason, — to prevent hatred and quarrelling.”

“You are not permitted to do evil that good

may come. It is a pernicious fallacy! It is an insult to Almighty God to suppose that *He* must borrow the Devil's tools to do his work with! All that concerns you, Grizelda, is to do right."

He had bent toward her and taken both her hands in his. The majestic force of conviction was in his face and words; Grizelda could not but be sorry for the wrong she had done, in the presence of an accuser at once so faithful and so kind. So he perceived in her face the resolve he desired; and he left her in the full hope that she had seen the reasonableness of his reproof, and would be true to her conscience and her womanhood.

Grizelda intended to be so. She resolved to keep out of temptation, and for three days Maxwell rode to his self-appointed tryst and found no one to meet him. Then his confidence began to waver; his vanity was wounded; he perceived that there were influences at work to prevent any meeting between him and Grizelda; and the fiercest passion in man, the passion of chase blended with the passion of revenge, was fully roused in his heart. If Grizelda had been without a single charm, he felt now that he must marry her. But neither

his nature nor his education led him to contemplate anything like the vulgarity of an elopement. It would be a far more perfect satisfaction to mould Grizelda so completely to his will that his influence should be the dominant one in McNeil Castle; that it should fill all the rooms with a sullen sense of wrong and dissatisfaction; put enmity between the child and the father; and make his marriage at last a ceremony in which he would condescend to accept the girl whom he had made unfit for any society but his own. Of course, like all other schemers, he forgot to take into account any counteracting influence, any unforeseen contingent. He simply conceived a plot, and demanded of destiny that it should be carried out.

His first movement was to write to Grizelda; and as he had resolved to fully commit himself, the letter was a passionate entreaty for an interview. It was Grizelda's first love-letter. It made her cheeks burn and her heart throb with delight. There had been nothing underhand or secret about its delivery. It came with the regular mail, and the girl received it at the breakfast table with several other letters.

Only Helen suspected its nature. The laird never noticed his daughter's suppressed excitement. He was eating a plover's egg, and talking in a pleasant, desultory way of the birds breeding in the upland mosses. There was something pitiful in his innocent unconsciousness of the wrong before him; something shocking in the readiness with which his child ordered her smile to meet his, and assumed that air of happy contentment which she thought the best blind to the watchful love surrounding her.

For in the moments in which she read Lord Maxwell's letter, she resolved to take her own way. The decision was instantaneous, but positive. By a mental action she put behind her instantly every consideration that could make her waver. For—

Alas! men and women are all  
The children of our first mother, Eve.  
What is given is lightly valued;  
And the cunning serpent is ever near  
To show them the mysterious untasted tree.  
And heaven itself is not heaven  
If the forbidden fruit be withheld.

*Russian poem.*

So when the breakfast was finished, she went to her own room, and read over and over

the few lines which had so powerfully influenced her: —

BEAUTIFUL GRIZELDA, — I have been watching three weary days for a sight of your face. Your wonderful favour surely gave me some reason to hope for it. Let me see you, I entreat! I know not how I shall endure another day without you. I live but to think of you, to hope for you, to watch and wait for a glance from your eyes, a word from your lips, and a touch of that hand whose touch can make me the happiest lover in the world. Surely, you will walk in the fir plantation this afternoon. Another disappointment will drive to despair your adorer,

MAXWELL.

It was a very ordinary letter. It had cost the writer scarcely a thought; but for it the foolish girl was ready to cast away all the sweet love which had cared for and guarded her and blessed her throughout her life. The writer was a comparative stranger who had put himself outside the good-will of the community, and who had been covertly guilty of a serious injury to her father's interests; but now she was quite ready to find excuses for all his faults, even though she had to slander those who loved her to do so.



Nor was she infatuated beyond her reason. In her truest consciousness she felt his unworthiness. It was not passion, not ignorance, not folly, not ambition, not even wilfulness that laid the foundation of her sin. It was what many girls consider a fine thing: sentimentality, — the putting of imagination before principle and duty. It seemed romantic to meet her lover clandestinely; to compare herself with the heroines of her fancy, of her reading; to “stand by her choice though all the world was against him;” ignoring the fact that if her choice was unworthy of such devotion, the motive was deprived of every element of respect. Besides,

This was the way with her : to vaguely sigh,  
Hating the weary sameness of each day,  
The noiseless round of pleasant tasks that try  
To sweeten life in many a quiet way ;  
Hating the scented sunshine, the still air,  
The plenteous gifts that came without a care.

She said, “ I weary ; if some change would come !  
I want to see, feel, hear the stress of life.  
I shall grow cold and blind and deaf and dumb ;  
I want some active joy, though it bring strife.  
My days are all alike ; a change would be  
Like giving to a captive liberty.”

So much she said in her unthankful mood,  
never reflecting that change comes seldom with

pleasure, often with pain, scarcely listening to the sweet remonstrating voice of her better angel, questioning, —

Art thou so weary of thy sister's love?  
So weary of thy father's brooding care?  
So tired of halcyon days that only move  
To the sweet calls of duty and of prayer?  
Art weary of God's blessing? Wouldst thou flee  
Out of the fold where He has sheltered thee?

Sing like a bird within thy happy nest,  
Bloom like a flower beneath thy cloudless sky!  
Rest like a child upon its mother's breast,  
And pray that this change only come to thee, —  
A thankful heart; then thy long, weary days  
Would be too short for happiness and praise.

It was this sentimental dissatisfaction with the blessings of her daily life, and this longing for something romantic, forbidden, something secret and personal, that made Grizelda turn aside from the right path. She was the captive of her own foolish imagination before she became the captive of an unprincipled man.

Helen was not so unsuspecting of the state of affairs as the laird had been. The minister had given her a warning and advice, and her womanly instincts had led her to a clear interpretation of Grizelda's face and manner. As far as it was right, she was inclined to sympa-

thize with her sister. She did not think the faults in Maxwell's character so grave as to preclude the idea of marriage if there were a true love between him and Grizelda. But she regretted the circumstances which were likely to prevent an open and honourable courtship; for she still hoped that a better acquaintance with the young lord would reveal many good qualities not as yet known.

She felt certain that the letter made an appointment which Grizelda would keep; and she thought it best to speak to her on the subject, and thus deprive the meeting of the silly sentiment of secrecy and of a supposed opposition, only to be met by a clever deceit.

In an hour Grizelda returned to the parlour. Helen looked at her with admiration as she bent silently over her embroidery frame. Her countenance was so beaming that its rosy light made remarkable the whiteness of her hands, moving quickly among the brilliant colours of her wools. The countenance has always a luminousness that the other parts of the body lack; and Grizelda's soul was in her face, darting from her eyes, flushing her cheeks, wreathing her lips with smiles, making her

brow shine and her eyelids quiver. She was happy, and she showed it in the undulations of her figure, and the freedom of her wavy hair, straying and curling as if it was laughing and dancing to the girl's thoughts.

"How pretty you are this morning, Grizelda!"

"I feel so happy."

"You got a letter from Lord Maxwell, I think; at least, I thought it was his seal. Is he coming to see you?"

"How can he come here? Just imagine the way in which our father would receive him!"

"He might be coming to apologize and make things pleasant."

"Why should he apologize?"

"Well, I think if father's dogs had done damage to Lord Maxwell's flock, he would apologize and make all the restitution in his power."

Grizelda did not answer; she appeared to be busy counting her stitches.

"Grizelda, dear, will you tell me what Maxwell wrote to you about?"

"Why should you interfere, Helen?"

"Because I love you so much, dear, and I am afraid he wishes you to meet him secretly."

"There is no harm in that."

"There is both harm and danger. If you think there is no harm, why do you not tell father?"

"Lord Maxwell loves me."

"Then he ought to say so in an honourable manner."

"Helen, I do not think as you do. I will not have my affairs discussed by the whole household, and wrangled over by lawyers. If I love a man well enough to marry him, I am going to trust him absolutely."

"Grizelda, you remember our mother. If she were alive to-day, you know what she would say to you. Think that you are listening to her. My dear sister, do not meet Maxwell secretly. If he truly loves you, he will conciliate father and come to you."

"This is my affair, Helen. I do not interfere between you and Colin. I got out of Mr. Selwyn's way, and let him have every opportunity."

"Grizelda, Mr. Selwyn never thought of love."

"Oh, indeed! He did not hide his thoughts from me."

"I am speaking of your life, not Mr. Selwyn's."

"I can manage my own life very well, Helen. All I ask of you is to have eyes and see not, and ears and hear not."

"I cannot do that, Grizelda."

"You intend to be a tell-tale, do you?"

"I intend to protest against your making assignations with Lord Maxwell. It is wrong; it is unwomanly and unladylike. You wrong both yourself and your position by it. Dearest Zelda, let me speak in my mother's place and my father's place this morning."

"I will not listen to you. *Now!*"

"Then, if you are determined to meet Maxwell, let me go with you?"

"Certainly not. I can take care of myself, and I wish you would believe it. I was so happy, and you have made me miserable. I think you are selfish beyond everything. Just because Colin and you choose to do your courting by rule and method, you want Maxwell and me to do the same. There is something very unjust and unsisterly in it. Now, I am not going to say another word on the matter."

She set her face so dourly, and bent her head so determinedly to her work, that Helen saw further conversation was impossible. She knew not what step to take. Something must be done; but she had a dislike to speak to her father, when he was already so angry at Maxwell. Who could tell what wretched results might ensue if the two men came in contact with Grizelda between them?

“I will write to Doctor Brodick!”

The thought seemed to her the best solution of the difficulty; and thus it happened that the minister, as he sat at his solitary dinner, received a letter which made him push his plate aside and seek the more composing and reflective influence of his pipe. And the result of this session with himself was exactly what Helen had hoped and expected.

“I’ll see the young things together. I know where I’ll be likely to find them. If there is any sense of honour in Maxwell’s heart, and any sense of duty and home affection in Grizelda’s heart, I can surely make them listen to me. Love ought to be lovely and of good report; and I’ll take care there is no other kind in my parish, if Dugald Brodick can help it.”

## CHAPTER IV.

### HER OWN WAY.

Better a little chiding than a great deal of heart-break.

SHAKESPEARE.

By Love the young and tender wit is turned to folly.

SHAKESPEARE.

First, then, a woman will, or won't, depend on 't ;

If she will do 't, she will ; and there 's an end on 't.

HILL.

We must do good against evil.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE afternoon was a brilliant one ; Nature herself seemed to be dreaming idyls, and Grizelda's heart, beating to sweet imaginations, was responsive to it. She arrayed herself in a dress of exquisitely fine muslin. Its pearly white, tinted with a wandering vine, gave ethereal beauty to her dazzling complexion. A floating gauze scarf was across her shoulders ; a little straw bonnet on her head, trimmed with corn-flowers and a few ears of wheat.



Never had Helen seen her look more lovely, more full of life, more certainly happy. She went with her to the door leading into the garden, and put her hand in Grizelda's.

"Are you quite sure you are doing right, dear?" she asked.

"I am quite sure I am doing what will make me happy."

"Zelda, bear with me a moment. If this love is necessary to your happiness, then, dear, I will speak to father; he is so good, so self-denying where our welfare is concerned, that I am sure he will be quite reasonable about Lord Maxwell. Write to Lord Maxwell now, and ask him to call here. I will send a servant with the note. Is not our drawing-room better for an interview than the public moor? Think of what people will say."

"Very few people cross the moor at this hour. If I see any one coming, I shall retreat among the pines."

"You mean that you will hide yourself. Oh, Zelda! Does not that very necessity show you that there is something wrong?"

"No. Many things are innocent that are not to be talked about. And how is it possible for

Lord Maxwell to come here? Father would get into one of his passions, and order him out of the house."

"Father is not unreasonable. Lord Maxwell has only to offer an apology; any man would do that under the circumstances. I will be on your side, Zelda. Write a few lines, dear, and let your maid take them to your lover. Let him come to you. That is only maidenly and modest."

"Helen, you are never on my side. Any other sister would take some interest in such a love-affair as mine; I do not want everything straightforward and agreeable just yet. A secret tryst is the only romantic one, and I do not thank you at all for interfering with mine. Even this talk about it has robbed me of some of its charm."

"If you mean to marry Lord Maxwell, it can never be done in this way."

"I mean to marry him, and I know better than you do how to succeed. If my father had said yes, and the door was set open for him, he might not want the yes or the open door. But it is different where there is anger and opposition; love is stronger for it, yes, and sweeter

too! I prefer a little romance. Let me go, Helen. You are only making things worse."

She drew her hand away with the words, and went swiftly down the garden. Helen watched her until she passed into the pine wood. There the girl slackened her pace, and stood still a moment to regain her mental poise and serenity; for her breath came quick, and she was in a flurry of emotion. But how charming was the silence of the pines, — silence, with a vague stir in it. There were no deep shadows where she stood; she was in a beautiful gloom, surrounded by light.

It was here that Lord Maxwell found her. He had left his horse with his groom on the moor and come to seek Grizelda. At this moment he certainly believed himself to be deeply in love, and no lover could have been more tender, more eloquent, more irresistibly persuasive. Maxwell was even astonished at his own enthusiasm; he had never expected to feel again emotions so sweet and so enthralling.

And it was quite true that in the clandestine nature of the meeting, in the belief that it was in direct opposition to the wishes of McNeil, in the probability that Grizelda's hand would be

angrily refused him, in the delightful contingency of over-reaching the indignant father and carrying off his daughter against his will, Lord Maxwell had found a piquant element in a love which was otherwise a delightful relief to the tedium of his purposeless life.

It was a charmed hour to both, and Maxwell became fascinating under its influence. For it is unfortunately true that bad men have often an irresistible power over women. Eve is not the only one who has found the Devil a tempter not to be denied. Maxwell's fine face caught the love-light from Grizelda's; his eyes looked into hers with a bewitching sensibility. He had the heart of the sentimental girl in the open palm of his long, cruel-looking white hand.

She had assured him of her love, of her willingness to do in all things as he directed her. She had put her father, her sister, her duty, the tender obligations of her whole life, under his feet. He could not but feel his triumph.

She had repeated to him, also, her conversation with Helen. She had given to it the precise tone of injury which she thought suited the situation; and they were discussing with de-

lightful gusto the probable consequences of her determined resistance, when they heard a slow, heavy footstep approaching them. Grizelda thought it was her father's, and she trembled upon her lover's arm. Maxwell was not averse to the encounter; he felt that he had poisoned weapons ready for it.

They did not turn. They continued their saunter and their lover-like conversation, listening all the time to the approaching steps. In a few minutes a hand was laid upon Lord Maxwell's shoulder, and he turned in a passion to confront Doctor Brodick.

"Sir, your cloth gives you no warrant to be impertinent!"

"It gives me a warrant to reprove wrongdoing and to save the foolish if I can. Grizelda McNeil, you had better go home; and if Lord Maxwell wants further speech with you, he can seek you there."

"Grizelda, you have promised to be my wife; you will remain with me?"

"I am here in your father's place; you must go home now. My lord, release the girl. She is yet under age, and subject to her father's controul."

"Grizelda, in an hour we can be at Blairgowrie. The minister is my friend; he will marry us at once."

Grizelda was now thoroughly frightened.

A runaway marriage was the last thing she desired. She had already arranged, in her own mind, the ceremony as she proposed to have it, the dresses and guests and wedding journey. Besides, Doctor Brodick's authority was an indisputable one; never in all her life had the possibility of disobeying it occurred to her.

She dropped her lover's hand; and in that moment of hesitation, the minister gently turned her face toward the castle, and stepping forward, placed himself between her and Lord Maxwell. Instantly Maxwell made an attempt to regain his position by Grizelda's side, but Doctor Brodick's hand fell upon his shoulder with a grip that could not be gainsaid.

"Doctor, remove your hand! Confound it, sir, you shall not presume on your coat much longer."

"I will make you, Lord, respect both my coat and the man in my coat!" Then the doctor, becoming angry, though still visibly calm, fell naturally into his mother tongue.

“Keep a ceevil tongue i’ your mouth, Lord, and your ither hand by your side. Dinna daur to lift it. There isna a fisherman on the coast I couldna handle, nor a shepherd on the hills I couldna throw; sae if you hae a grain o’ wisdom, you willna force your punishment frae me.”

Grizelda had stood quite still during this dispute. Maxwell answered the minister by addressing her: “Grizelda, this is no scene for you, my dear one. Go home now and I will see you to-morrow. My rights are in your hands now; I am sure you will not betray the least of them.”

She would have given him her hand with the assurance, but Doctor Brodick stood like a sentinel between them. And Maxwell was in a grip he could not evade, while Grizelda lacked the moral courage to defy the prohibition which she saw in the doctor’s blazing eyes and watchful face. Until Grizelda was out of sight, the position the minister had taken and compelled Maxwell to take was preserved; but as soon as she had disappeared, Maxwell felt himself at liberty. They had been moments of intense feeling to both men. Doctor Brodick already



showed the reaction from them. A gloomy regret was on his countenance. His voice, though authoritative, had regained its usual modulations and propriety. He was the first to speak.

“Believe me, Maxwell, I am sorry for this occasion. My interference was for good. I saw no other way to prevent evil.”

“If by preventing evil you mean preventing Grizelda McNeil marrying me, let me assure you, sir, that you have failed already. I shall certainly marry her.”

“Then, my lord, do not teach the girl to be disloyal to her father. You only prepare her to be in the future disloyal to yourself. I have no more to say to you at this time.”

He turned on his heel, and left the young man fuming and chafing with rage and humiliation. And he went straight to McNeil Castle and talked the circumstance over with the laird. His depression was so great that it had the effect of dashing as with cold water the father's not unjust anger. Both men had the presentiment of sorrow; they felt the first chill shadows of some long calamity.

But as an outcome of this conversation,



McNeil's carriage was at the door the following morning very early, and Helen and Grizelda were making hurried preparations for a journey to Edinburgh. No reason for it had been given, but both girls understood "the because" of the laird's unexpected movement. McNeil had called it a little pleasure trip; but no one taking the journey felt it to be so. Each was leaving the person or the affairs which made the main interest of their lives. It was in fact to McNeil a journey of great self-denial. The herring fishery was at its height, the gunning season was at hand, and the moors were alive with birds. And, aside from these disappointments, he felt it to be a wrong and an outrage that his own child should have given a strange man, whom he despised and disliked, the power to disarrange his household and compel him to leave his home and his interests; for he was no more aware of this injustice and indignity than Grizelda was, and it gave him a heartache to see that she willingly subjected him to it.

It was, moreover, soon evident that the journey was to be in vain. Grizelda would take no part in the life of the metropolis. Dinners, dances, excursions had no temptations for her. She

declared that she was ill; she did not eat or sleep; she was cold, silent, apathetic, and treated the old friends and kindred of the family with a sullen indifference which gave great offence, and which the laird, in some cases, found it beyond his power to explain away.

One afternoon he desired to make a call upon Lady McNeil, the widow of his second cousin. Grizelda was her namesake; it was a matter of the gravest courtesy that she should accompany her father and sister. But the wilful girl made so many excuses, was so determined to be disagreeable and disappointing, that it was thought best not to insist upon her company.

For such unkind and persistent ill-temper and selfishness the Devil sometimes rewards his slaves with their own desires. Scarcely had McNeil and Helen left the door of their hotel, when Lord Maxwell passed it; Grizelda, standing listlessly at the window, lifted her eyes and saw him. His gaze was fixed upon her, he was trying to arrest her attention. In five minutes she was by his side. They turned into a quiet square, and were soon discussing, almost merrily, the events most interesting to them.

Maxwell was delighted with the tactics pur-

sued by Grizelda. He perceived that they made him still master of the situation. And it gave him an intense satisfaction to know that he had really driven the laird from his home, his fishing and his shooting, and all his familiar interests and amusements; to reflect, also that the young laird, Colin McNeil, was deprived of the society of Helen; and that Helen was taken from her lover and from all the duties in the castle and village which interested her so much.

"I think we have had quite the best of it, Zelda," he said, with a malicious triumph. "Now, then, my love, meet me to-morrow morning at ten o'clock, in Saint Andrew's Kirk, and I will make you Lady Maxwell in spite of them all."

"First, consider what I shall tell you, Walter. My father says plainly that if I marry without his consent, eighty thousand pounds in the Bank of Scotland will every shilling of it go to Helen. If he agrees to my marriage, Helen and Colin are to have the estate and twenty thousand pounds, I the residue."

"Sixty thousand pounds! Whew!"

"We ought not to throw that away."

"Indeed, we ought not."

“It is worth a few words, Walter; and I do not like to come to you penniless and by stealth. Father is really kind-hearted; quickly in a rage, but just as quick to forgive. A little conciliation will win him.”

“I have already ordered my factor to see his factor, and pay whatever they decide to be right for those miserable sheep that were worried. When you return home, I will call upon him and ask for your hand. If he consents, he can scarcely refuse your fortune; if he does not consent — ”

“I shall make his life so wretched that he will be thankful to change his mind. It is a very hard thing if a girl cannot choose her own husband. Oh, my dear one, how happy you have made me! I can endure all things now till we meet again.”

There was nothing for Grizelda to endure but the burdens she laid upon her own shoulders; but it pleased her to imagine herself an innocent victim of parental oppression and unsisterly lack of sympathy.

It was impossible for her to remain long with her lover; but arrangements were made which permitted her to meet him nearly every day,

for a longer or a shorter time. And it gave her no compunction to save all her smiles, all her pleasant ways and words for her lover, and darken all her father's and sister's days with an affectation of suffering which had now no shadow of existence.

In a week or two, Helen began to suspect this. There were times when it was impossible for Grizelda to quite subdue the light of expectation in her eyes, or the dreamy smile of retrospective pleasure around her mouth. Grizelda was in the daily society of Maxwell, — Helen was satisfied of that; but there was something in the girl's nature which forbade her to watch her sister, no matter how excusable circumstances might seem to make the act. Her eyes, indeed, questioned her, and Grizelda was aware of the suspicion. "Things are coming to a crisis," she thought, "and I may as well direct them."

One afternoon, the laird, having been sorely tried by her contradiction all the morning, refused to go out for his customary drive in the afternoon. His heart failed him. He felt as if it were useless to prolong the conflict. The very chivalry of his nature led him to a trust and consideration where his daughter was con-

cerned that he would by no means have conceded to a disobedient son. He could not watch Grizelda's movements and read her letters, and be stern and imperative with her. The pale, silent, weary-looking girl on the sofa appealed to him, not only as his daughter, but as one of a sex which demanded his courtesy and consideration. He felt this day, her injustice, her want of appreciation for this courtesy, and his heart was so sad that he could not make the effort to face the world.

As the time approached for Grizelda to keep her tryst, she threw off her indifference, rose from her sofa, and went to her room. The laird did not notice the movement, but Helen followed her sister. She was taking out her bonnet and mantle, and she made no secret of her action.

"Are you going out, Grizelda? How pleased father will be! It is not yet too late for a drive."

"I am not going to drive, and I do not want either father's company or yours. I do not mean to be rude, Helen, only I must go alone."

"Are you going to meet Lord Maxwell? Oh, Zeld, I have suspected this!"

"Then your suspicions are correct, Helen. I am going to meet my Walter! Goodness knows, it is all I have to live for!"

"You should not say such wicked things. You have all that truest love can give you. But if you are meeting Maxwell here, father ought to know. He is pining for the moors and the sea and the comforts of his own home. He has been denying himself for six weeks everything he enjoys, simply in the hope that he was keeping you outside the influence of a bad man."

"Then tell him to go back to Edderloch. He cannot keep Lord Maxwell from me unless he locks me up in the castle strong-room; and he cannot keep me from Lord Maxwell if I have the wit and strength to reach him. I despise a girl who gives up her lover because her friends don't approve of him. I would die first!"

"There is no necessity for heroics, Grizelda. No one asks you to die. And don't you think there may be something equally despicable in deceiving a good father, and putting him to daily anxiety and discomfort, because your lover does not approve of him. Depend upon



it, father has no intention of locking you up. He thinks you have chosen an unworthy husband; and he would suffer a great deal himself to wean your heart from Lord Maxwell, or to show you that there are plenty of better lovers in the world, but he has no intention of forcing you to give him up."

"Then tell him we may as well go home. It will be more comfortable for every one."

This news was more easily broken to the laird than Helen had dared to hope. Returning to his presence, she found him mournfully watching the gay throng which makes Princes Street in the afternoon so fair a sight.

"I was thinking of Edderloch," he said, as he turned away. "I would give something to see the great billows tumbling wild and high and sending clouds of spray against the castle wall, or to be in the shadow of the hills and see the little brown huts nestling there, and the collie dogs, and flocks of sheep moving to and fro; or better still, to be after the cock grouse, or watching the red deer going westward in a swinging gallop."

"Dear father, we may as well go back to-morrow." Her face, troubled and pitiful, told



him the rest. He let his head fall forward as he asked in a low voice, "Is he here?"

"Yes."

"And she is meeting him?"

"Yes."

Then his soul forgot all words but the mournful Gaelic in which his fathers had cried out in their sorrow for unknown centuries: "*Oh! hon-a-ree! Oh! hon-a-ree!*" And upon his clasped hands the tears dropped down, and Helen knelt at his side and kissed them away.

## CHAPTER V.

### GRIZELDA'S MARRIAGE.

We, ignorant of ourselves,  
Beg often our own harms, which the wise powers  
Deny us for our good.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE journey home was most unhappy. The laird did not speak to his refractory daughter, and she did not appear to regret a circumstance which gave her the opportunity of feeding her heart upon her own thoughts and dreams. The weather was stormy, the roads heavy and disagreeable, and no one, except Grizelda, had any equivalent for the altogether wretched and useless journey. To her it had proved her lover's faithfulness. She felt all the triumph of the pursuit; and she found a sufficient pleasure in affecting sleep and mentally reviewing the fond words he had said, and the delightful plans for the future which they had imagined.

But at length the wearisome trial was over. McNeil crossed his door-stone again, and looked up at the declaration above it with a heart full of gratitude. The old rooms were glowing with firelight, and bright with every kind of comfort. Colin was at hand, full of joy and congratulation; the servants were eager for a word from him; the shepherds, the fishers, the village children, all tried to make him understand how welcome to his own home and to his own people he was.

And it was very pleasant to see Helen's delight also; to watch her going through the rooms, and ordering the table, and re-arranging their lives. Colin followed her up and down, and was restless if the laird detained him. He had discovered in her absence how lonely his heart, how desolate his home was without her. He felt that a passive admiration would no longer suffice; and he had met her with words that sent a wave of colour over her cheeks and filled her eyes with a new and sudden light.

The laird noticed very soon how constantly Colin was at her side, how readily his voice fell into softer tones when he spoke to her, how frequently he found opportunities of bend-

ing his dark, handsome head until he could almost have kissed the paler glory of her golden-brown hair. It pleased and it pained him. He was willing to give Helen to Colin, but not yet, — “not just yet,” he kept saying to his heart.

In the evening Doctor Brodick called, and the two men went together into the laird’s parlour.

“Well, old friend,” said the minister, “have you brought good news with you?”

“It has been a most unlucky journey, Doctor. The man followed us. She has been meeting him, secretly, every day.”

“Why did you give her any opportunity?”

“She said she was ill. She lay upon the sofa constantly, and it was not likely I could shut Helen up night and day with her. There are McNeils in Edinburgh, and other friends and kin, and we had to see them or give them an offence not to be pardoned in this generation. If the girl was too ill to dine and visit with her own people, how could I suspect she would be walking about the streets with her lover?”

“Man, you are na up to women-folk. I’m feared you did not take proper care of her.”

"Did you ever try to guide a love-sick girl yourself, Doctor? If you have not, you know nothing about it. For perfect unreasonable-ness, for selfishness, and deception they can beat the big Devil himself. What will I do now?"

"I'll tell you, Laird. Deal openly with her. Don't give her a chance to deceive you. Take away from her every excuse for indulging herself in any romancing folly. Ask her if she is determined to marry Maxwell. If she says she is, let the man come here and see her. The best half of such love-affairs as this is contradiction. If Maxwell means all he has said, give your permission to what will be otherwise taken without your permission. Of course, Maxwell would rather you refused him; he would like you to order him from your presence, but I advise you to disappoint him. For Grizelda's sake, give him at least a bare civility."

"I cannot do it, Doctor! I cannot! I cannot do it!"

"Think a bit, McNeil. Look at the very worst side of the man. He isna a murderer or a thief or an out-and-out blackguard that

we know of; he is well born, he has an estate in Galloway besides Blairgowrie; he is made welcome at many a grand house, and rides and hunts with the best men in the neighbourhood; and he goes regularly to kirk, so that if he be not good he is at least in the way of getting good."

"If he be not good! When Kilmory's shepherd told him about his dogs tearing the sheep on the mountains, he went off into a fit of outrageous laughter. When Greenlees sent him word, he cursed the messenger, and wished the dogs had torn the men to pieces as well as the sheep! He never attempted to restrain them until my false daughter betrayed my threat to him. The man has a brute's nature—I'm feared I am slandering the poor brutes. He is naturally cruel; he has a stone instead of a heart."

"But if Grizelda thinks differently, what then?"

"If Grizelda be determined to make her bed in hell, and will neither listen to advice nor entreaties, she must even do so."

"Try, for her sake, to conquer your dislike of Maxwell, Laird."

“The feeling is beyond me, Doctor. When I can drink poison and it not harm me, I can sit with Maxwell and not feel it to be an insult and an offence. The hatred of him is back of here. My soul is acquainted with his soul; and when my soul says to me, ‘The man is a villain,’ I know he is one. I don’t mind if he drank the holy cup every Sunday, I would know it all the same. You think this is pure prejudice, Doctor?”

“True, McNeil; but what we call prejudice is often only a veiled truth, subtly adapted to the nature that holds it, — too fine, too complicated, too delicate for argument and definition. Have you told Grizelda of these impressions?”

“To be sure I have. She only smiled, and said it was a pity I had so much of the melancholy, superstitious nature of the Celt in me. As if I could have too much of the Celt in me! She is set upon going her own bad way.”

“Well, then, McNeil, you must trust God to bring good out of bad. Neither of us can do it, for the root of Grizelda’s disobedience and folly is selfishness; and the sin of selfishness is ‘the old serpent that deceiveth the whole world.’”

“ Oh! Doctor, I know now how David felt when he cried out, ‘ It was thou, mine own familiar friend!’ It is my child! Oh, Grizelda! Grizelda!”

“ Consider, Laird, if one heart has been faithless to you, there are other hearts around you full of valiant tendernesses, — hearts that know how to love. The earth might quake, the heavens melt, you would still find them true. And though Grizelda’s affection has been alienated from you, I do not believe that any one will have the power to destroy the grand principles of morality on which I have helped you to build up her life. And mind this, Laird, the one real, intolerable household ruin is not that which separates but that which corrupts. If vice has not withered the soul of the child, the parents may still say ‘ Thank God!’ But I must away, now, Laird, for I have a night-school to teach at eight o’clock; and the lads and lasses would be sairly disappointed if I were not on hand.”

“ A night-school! Such perfect nonsense! Selwyn’s order, is it?”

“ Selwyn’s order, if it pleases you to call it so.”



"It does not please me, Doctor; and I don't think anybody will approve of the kirk being used for the like of it. It is a kind of desecration, — that is my opinion."

"I remembered that feeling, Laird, and respected it. The school is in my ain house; Kirsty is tossing her head about it, but she will have to thole the bairns until I get a schoolhouse built."

"And where will you get the siller for it?"

"I am not just destitute of siller myself; and I am looking for help from divers, and for land from you."

"I will not give you enough to set your feet together on, Doctor, for such a purpose."

"Ay, well, I am not asking you to-night. When you come to your best self, Laird, we will speak about it. God be with you."

Then he wrapped his plaid round his breast and left the castle. He was tossed and troubled in mind with the fretful worries and perplexities that he shared with McNeil, and they chilled his enthusiasm and made all life's objects appear small and irritating. But there is always something very impressive in passing from light and human society into the dim spaces of the night and the solemn company of the stars,

and ere he reached the manse and the duty he had appointed there, he had quite recovered that elevation of spirit which made it not only possible, but welcome and pleasant.

In the morning, McNeil sent for Grizelda to his room. She had thought such a summons likely, and was prepared for it. Her resolution was in her face, and her face was very handsome. Her father had never been more struck with her beauty. She had the air of a princess, and her robe of dark cloth, falling in straight, heavy folds to her feet, clothed her with grace and dignity.

"Sit down, Grizelda. I want you to tell me truly if you have resolved to take Lord Maxwell in place of your father, your sister, and your home."

"I have determined to marry Lord Maxwell."

"Then tell him to come here when he wishes to see you. The drawing-room is at your disposal. Only farm servants trapse about the moor and lean over gates and fences."

"Do you mean, father, that you give your consent to our marriage?"

"I mean that I submit to the evil that you force upon me."

"Father, I love Lord Maxwell."

"Once you loved me. Oh, Grizelda, marriage is such a solemn thing! It is so easy to marry; but to get unmarried! what suffering must precede it! what shame must be associated with it!"

"I shall never wish to be unmarried. I know Lord Maxwell as others do not."

She looked at him a little entreatingly and a little defiantly; she looked so like her dead mother that his heart melted. He had put out his hand, took her hand, drew her to his side and kissed her. "Will you wait one year, my child, — only one year? It is all I will ask you."

"Maxwell wishes to be married at Christmas. He is going to take me to London. Lady Mary Maxwell will present me at court."

"You seem to have settled all without me. That is not the way a gentleman seeks a wife, Grizelda. I have a right to be consulted. My right is older than any one's; stronger than any one's."

"You are so prejudiced against Maxwell, father. Of course, he will see you if you give him permission."

"Tell him to call on me. There are business considerations in your marriage that must be attended to. I want to know what settlement he proposes to make upon you. A daughter of the McNeil cannot be married like a milking-maid." He glanced into her face. Her eyes were cast down, but a beautiful light stole from under their dropped lids, and a soft smile lingered about her mouth. Her whole attitude was that of a girl thinking of her lover with trust and expectation.

But the father's heart was full of trouble that he hardly understood, it was compacted of elements so diverse. From twenty years of love, memory seemed to instantly reproduce every scene that was tenderest and sweetest; and Lord Maxwell intruded himself as their defacer and destroyer. He had a sense, also, of being unjustly treated in the matter, which was almost harder to bear than his slighted affection. For the first time in her life, Grizelda saw his face lose every particle of colour; and his hands trembled so violently that the paper-knife he had been holding fell from them.

"Are you sick, dear father?" She looked anxiously at him as he shook his head in de-

nial. But he put his elbow on the table, and for several minutes rested his head in his hand. Grizelda stood motionless beside him. She felt severely the pain she was giving. She had a momentary intention of resigning her will to his will; but ere she could decide between her father and her lover, McNeil rose and went to his desk. Grizelda knew the book which he took from it.

“Grizelda, a girl wants clothes, — wedding clothes; I don't know how much money. Here is a check for six hundred pounds; if it is not enough, tell Helen to come to me for more. Get all that is necessary to your position. You have not much time before Christmas.”

He spoke slowly, and with a depression that weighted every word as with lead. And suddenly it seemed to Grizelda as if a wall had been built between him and her; she wished to kiss and thank him for his consideration, but the cold despair of his attitude was too discouraging.

And the piece of paper in her hands reproached her. Yet why? She asked herself the question over and over, with an almost angry defiance; she was only doing what other

girls did. And of his own free will, perhaps only for the satisfaction of his own family pride and honour, had he given her the money at all. She clung to this last idea, and carefully nursed it; for when a girl is bent on a course of ingratitude and selfishness, the first thing the Devil teaches her is to debase all the past love which she is violating, and to find for every forbearance and every kindness a selfish motive.

The following day Lord Maxwell had an interview with the laird. They met with a determination on both sides to think the best of each other. McNeil, for his daughter's sake, wished to do so; and Maxwell was not inclined to indulge his temper at the price of the sixty thousand pounds which might otherwise be Grizelda's fortune. Neither was he so much in love as to be financially over-generous in the matter of future provision for his wife. McNeil's question as to the settlement which he intended to make on her, was promptly met with one as to the fortune he intended to give Grizelda.

"I am not prepared to say what I shall give Grizelda," was the answer. "You are aware, my lord, that my consent to her marriage has been in a manner forced from me. When I am

satisfied that it is a good marriage and a happy one, I will amply provide for your wife and her possible heirs. Until then, I shall keep her money where I can put my own hands upon it."

"Then, McNeil, you can hardly expect me to make any settlement of my property on her."

"I cannot say that I did expect it. It would have supposed a very unusual generosity, and an affection quite beyond money considerations, — a thing not to be looked for."

"Suppose, then, we leave money considerations until you consider our affection thoroughly tested. What lapse of time is your idea of a trial?"

He spoke with a slow insolence which he found it impossible to controul. But, though McNeil's eyes flashed, he answered with a calm precision, which left no doubt of his sincerity:

"If at the end of five years Grizelda is a happy wife, willing to trust in your honour and rely on your love, I will give her sixty thousand pounds; at my death there may be more."

Maxwell rose at the words. His first impulse was to leave the castle and never see Grizelda



again; but a faint flicker of satisfaction on McNeil's face roused a suspicion in his heart which made him determine to marry Grizelda, no matter what came after it.

"He intended to frighten me away, and then preach to Grizelda about my unworthiness; to boast to every petty sheep-raising laird around of the way in which he saved his child from me. He shall not do it. I will marry the girl!"

These thoughts flashed through his mind even as he rose to his feet. They helped him to keep his words and actions under controul; and he asked, with a civility that astonished himself: "I have now, then, your permission to see Grizelda?"

"You have my permission, Maxwell."

And in giving this permission, McNeil was chivalrous and honourable enough to give all that appertained to it. It included the courtesy of the whole household, and even a seeming interest in the necessary preparations for the marriage. Fortunately the strain was as great upon Maxwell as upon the McNeil family. He was anxious to shorten it as much as possible, and Christmas eve was selected by him for the ceremony. McNeil had objections to the



time, but he did not make them; the main thing in his mind being to keep the strained attitude of all parties at the point of courtesy and politeness.

Colin wisely passed a great deal of the time in a visit to Edinburgh. The Edinburgh McNeils had to be told of the intended marriage, and they were quite pleased with it. They looked forward with satisfaction to their relationship with Lady Maxwell. Her house in London would be a nice place to call at, and to talk about. And Colin did not think it necessary to say anything against the young lord. Indeed, he was rather inclined to think that but scant justice had been done him. He told Helen that he could understand how a man might passionately side with his dogs even against his sense of what was right; and otherwise he thought Maxwell a gentlemanly fellow enough. He wished the laird could see that Grizelda was doing very well; and he privately had little opinion of dislikes and impressions which had no tangible cause to rest upon. Presentiments of any kind belonged to a by-gone age.

So the few intervening weeks went over with

at least an apparent placidity. Helen was the sweet spirit who kept peace on every hand. She told the laird whatever could give him pleasure or confidence; she hid from him all likely to breed suspicion or dislike. She kept the men apart when there was an atmosphere unfavourable to conciliation. She put Grizelda in every light that was charming to both her father and her lover; unconsciously she was hourly practising those numberless innocent hypocrisies of love, which prevent many a domestic quarrel, and make every one satisfied with themselves and affectionate to others.

They were happy weeks to Grizelda. The very hurry that was necessary in order to procure her wardrobe gave her a sense of delightful occupation. Beautiful garments were constantly arriving; and as the wedding-day approached, the castle began to fill with guests. The McNeils were a great clan, and all the heads of the different branches had to be invited.

And the laird, in the presence of such a gathering of his family, began to have some uneasy feelings about Grizelda's fortune. He

had no doubt that many of them would ask him straight questions on the subject. It would be very humiliating to confess that he had given her nothing. The reason would be inquired for, and how could he say that he had been led to this extraordinary caution by Maxwell's unfeeling or ungentlemanly conduct about a few sheep, or by his own fixed conviction of the man's cruel and dishonourable character?

"Doctor, what will I do in the premises?" he asked one day, when the subject pressed him closely.

"You have done right, McNeil. What will you want to undo it for?"

"Folk will ask questions."

"You have not such a small measure of capacity as to fear a few old men and women asking questions. You have done right. Then do not undo it."

Still, at the last he was induced to give more than he intended. Partly his action was a spontaneous outgrowth of purest love, partly it was the result of a foolish pride which could not suffer itself to be put in a secondary place. It happened very naturally that Lord Maxwell, subjected constantly to Grizelda's many charms,

became deeply in love with her; and to gratify his passionate admiration of her beauty, he presented her with many beautiful ornaments. It gave him delight to clasp his shining bracelets on her lovely arms, and kiss the brilliant locket around her white throat, and gem her fingers with rings, and pin up her hair with gold and coral. And yet, as a secondary pleasure, he was not unconscious that he enjoyed showing McNeil he could adorn Grizelda as she had never been adorned before. McNeil was aware of this feeling (it may be doubted if Maxwell had ever a mean thought of which McNeil was not aware); and he watched Grizelda's pride and excitement over her lover's gifts until a certain intention gradually took form in his mind. He did not speak of it; he did not put it into action until Grizelda came to him on Christmas eve in all her bridal beauty. Full of pride and joy, she tapped lightly at the locked door, as she said, —

“ Father! ”

He opened to her at once. He was already dressed for the ceremony, and she was as much struck with his noble appearance as he was with her own surpassing loveliness. He held

her hands, and looked with an inexpressible affection at the white-robed girl. She glistened in white satin and lace; she carried orange blossoms and mistletoe in her hand; her eyes shone with love and happiness; her face was like a young rose with the summer sunshine on it.

“My sweet Grizelda! My dear child!”

“Father, you will not cease to love me?”

“Never, while I live.”

“Will you forgive me to-night all my disobedience to you? I am sorry for it.”

“I will forgive you, freely.”

“Will you try and love Walter?”

“I will try — for your sake.”

“For his own sake, dear father?”

“Yes, I will try, if he is good and kind to you.”

“He is sure to be good to me, I do not fear.”

“Grizelda, this is my bride present to you.”

He opened some cases, and took from them a necklace and pendant of diamonds and sapphires, a bracelet, a ring for her finger, and a comb for her hair of the same brilliant gems. “Part of these I bought for your mother, Grizelda; part of them I have bought purposely for you.”

“ Oh, my father, how good you are to me ! — how kind ! ”

“ I mean to be so ; truly, I mean to be kind to you in all things. God knows I do ! ”

Then he kissed her, and put the jewels in her hand. In his heart there was a great struggle of feeling ; but amid all, he was pleased to see Grizelda shining in gems that dwarfed all of Maxwell's gifts. For, in spite of his promise to try and love him for his daughter's sake, he did not like or trust him one bit better ; and though he heard him vow, in the presence of God and the gathered clan of McNeil, to love and cherish Grizelda, he did not believe in him, — he never for a moment believed in him.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE McNEIL'S WORK.

Wise men ne'er sit and wail their loss,  
But cheerly seek how to redress their harms.

SHAKESPEARE.

Find something to do. The power to find or make an object  
is a great part of genius.

MALLOCK.

Life does not make us : we make life.

J. KAVANAGH.

THE best remedy for injuries is to forget them. After Grizelda, with all her charms and all her faults, had left her home, every one made the effort not only to hope to the utmost for her happiness, but also to forget every unpleasant circumstance and suspicion connected with Lord Maxwell. He had shown his most plausible side to Colin, and Colin had an apology or a good word always ready for him. And it was but natural that Helen should, in a measure, echo Colin's thoughts, especially when her own kind heart and her hopes for her

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sister's happiness made it wise and desirable to do so.

The laird said nothing contrary to this tone, and he appeared to enter into the pleasure and triumph of Grizelda's London life with great interest. He had, in fact, made a compact with himself to give Maxwell perfect justice in all respects. So in this amicable tone the castle settled down to its new conditions. For half a year, life in it had seemed like a restless dream. Different elements had crept into each new day, and nothing had gone on in that regular manner which alone gives the feeling of security and permanence.

But very soon a happy placid monotony became the rule of daily events. Peace and order reigned undisputed; the morning and the evening came, each with its own quiet meal and happy conversation. The pleasant rooms shone in the firelight or the sunlight, or gained a tenfold comfort by the beating of the rain and the howling of the stormy winds outside.

Or, when the weather was fine and clear, McNeil and the young laird spent the day upon the hills, and came home at night happily wearied, with bags full of birds, with hunters'



heartly appetites, and scraps of country-side gossip. And so for a few weeks the sweet monotony of a happily ordered home went on, and in it every one gathered strength.

Toward the end of February, McNeil began to contemplate again the plans for a more active life which had occupied his thoughts at intervals during the past five years; and one morning, after a long storm, when the gray atmosphere was still full of misty rain, and the beach or the hills not to be thought of, he called Colin into his room.

"Colin," he said, "I think we are both ready for work; if you are, I am."

"I shall be glad of it."

"It is the only thing of which a man does not weary. I have already said something to you anent my plans. They have been growing to perfection without any care of mine, but they are ripe for the working now; and if we do not turn events into gold, others, and perhaps strangers, will do so."

"Count on me to be your right hand, uncle."

"I do that, Colin. Well, on the steep bluff we call Britta, I propose to build a fine summer

hotel. The travellers up the Crinan Canal will fill it. For the past three years, thousands have turned aside to visit the grand waterfalls and lovely valleys in the vicinity. Artists have camped there, bringing their own tents; and sportsmen have sheltered themselves in the shepherds' huts near by, for the salmon and trout fishing in the small estuaries from Loch Fine is wonderful. And I have encouraged all these visitors, until the place is already well known."

"But you cannot keep an hotel, uncle; it is a business by itself."

"I am not such a fool, Colin, as to think I can. Forbye, the McNeil cannot do anything so mechanical and tradesmanlike. It is an investment to me. Others will do the labour. It would be an insult to the living and the dead if the McNeil was to put himself in the way of serving strangers for money."

"Then, if you are the real proprietor, and some other man the active one, are you not afraid of being wronged?"

"No, I am not. They will be cleverer rogues than have yet been born if they wrong me. When I have money out, I mostly know what

every penny of it is doing. Admitting this, what do you think of the scheme?"

"I think very well of it. McLean has built such an hotel on Loch Scredon, and he is growing rich on the revenue from it. MacLeod has one in Harris, and Mackenzie in Lewis; I do not see why McNeil should not have one in Knapdale. I shall be delighted to help you in every way that I can."

"Thank you, Colin. I am a happy man to have a helper like you. First, there will be an architect to see."

"We can get a good one in Glasgow; and in Glasgow I can always hire whatever men are necessary."

"Diggers and delvers are the first necessity. But as these men must have shelter, stone-masons are wanted. There is plenty of materials for them. We might build about a dozen cottages not far from the hotel site. They will form the nucleus for the village, — ay, the town, — which will be certain to spring up there."

"I will go about the work to-morrow if you wish."

"I do. You are all I hoped for, Colin. One

hand washes the other; and it is a sign of prosperity when the men in a house can work out one scheme together. And there are other godsendings at our door, Colin, such as the lobster fishery, for which the market is just extraordinary; and I am going to have a small fleet of boats to carry them to Glasgow. The catching of them and the carrying of them to market will make a grand winter industry for the men. I'll give an invite to all honest idle men around about, and I'll be doing good to myself and to others."

After this conversation there was no lack of vivid enterprise in McNeil Castle. Colin was going and coming continually, and the laird appeared to have grown ten years younger. His bold and yet cautious enterprise was splendidly backed by Colin's enthusiasm and physical endurance; and in a few weeks the work had been well begun.

And time passes rapidly that is filled with labour. The spring opened to the sound of the pick and the hammer, and there was an air of hope and prosperity, and a sense of business that admitted of no lazy intervals, about the little hamlet. It made the staid old fishers

shake their heads and wonder mournfully what the world and the McNeil were coming to.

As the summer grew and the work went busily on, the laird was like another person. Nature had given him all the qualities necessary for a leader or director of large bodies of men. His presence was felt everywhere. His gigantic form stood like a tower among the bowed workers. His clear, resonant voice, commanding, directing, encouraging, was the one distinct tone in the babel of tongues, the chip, chip of the stone-masons, the ring of the trowels, and the sounds of the hammers and saws.

Colin was his lieutenant. He was nearly always on the move. The change of workers, the constant need for material, or directions not remembered until the necessity demanded them, the money transactions incident to the enterprise were all dependent upon him; so that the drowsy old castle was now ever on the lookout or the preparation, — Colin was going away, or Colin was coming home; the architect from Glasgow was making his regular inspection, or Mr. Balfour, the writer from Edinburgh, who had a share in the investment, was paying a

visit to the laird to consult or advise with him as to the progress of the work.

And this change in the business life of Edderloch was met by one equally great in its social and domestic aspects. The minister, in his way, was as full of fresh interests as the laird. He had been brought suddenly into contact with a new and perplexing kind of parishioners, and put face to face with the very duties which he had discussed theoretically with George Selwyn.

Colin had made it a special condition in all the workmen brought from Glasgow that they should be Protestants. It was, indeed, a piece of practical wisdom to insist on this point, for the neighbouring lairds would have opposed the introduction of a Roman Catholic element and an adverse nationality into their quiet villages and pastures; and between it and the indigenous race, fierce quarrels would certainly have sprung up, not only retarding the work, but also bringing it into bad repute.

But, for all that, they were very different Protestants from the grave, mystical Calvinists who gathered in Brodick's kirk every Sabbath day from the sheep-folds and the boats. Those

of them who really cared for their religion were usually from Ayrshire and Galloway, and had an old Covenanting rebelliousness about them. And they carried the almost inevitable democratic tendency of Calvinism to its extreme outcome of radicalism. They disputed with Doctor Brodick on church government, and they sang Robert Burns's most democratic songs in the McNeil's very presence. They were also vulgar and quarrelsome. The poorest Highland gillie on the hills had a vein of poetry in his nature; but these men from the Glasgow pavements were painfully matter-of-fact. They could not even understand a courtesy unless it took the form of a glass of whiskey.

The problem which they presented to Brodick was one to which he bent his whole nature. He understood now why George Selwyn had been sent to speak to him; and he answered the call he believed himself to have received, with a cheerful alacrity, a glad "Here I am, Lord," that had in it not only the wisdom of age, but the enthusiasm of youth.

And what Colin was to the laird, Helen was to the minister. They took sweet counsel together; they encouraged one another when diffi-



culties sprang up; they worked hand in hand for the tangible welfare of the people, whom they accepted as God's special charge to them. In many respects it was impossible to do much without the laird's consent. He owned all the land; he was a master no one dared to disobey. But he was not able to resist Helen; sooner or later she won from him whatever was desired.

Thus the summer passed rapidly away, and in October six new lobster-boats, with all their traps and tongs, etc., were launched. They brought nearly twenty new families to Edderloch, and the utmost capacities of the village were needed to shelter them. The new cottages had been severely denounced by Brodick. He pointed out to the laird how they disregarded all the laws of health, and were, in fact, just as barbarous as those which the McNeils had built three or four centuries ago. But the men themselves were with McNeil and against change, and Brodick then understood what Selwyn had often told him, —

“You will have to teach men what is good for their bodies as well as their souls; and the latter is far more dependent on the former than most ministers like to admit.”



As the first natural result of the increase of population, the Change House was enlarged; and before the winter was over, a rival one had been opened. "The Devil is a busy bishop in his parish," said Brodick to the laird, when the subject was named; "but there is one good offset against it, — the men are mostly very well pleased to learn something. It is wonderful how many of them come at night for the schooling they never had before."

*"Humph!"*

"I have men forty years old, Laird, as eager as bairns for knowledge; and I tell you, McNeil, it was a good thought to turn the manse barn into a warm room for them. When the lessons are over and the children gone home, I ask the men to take out their pipes and gather about the fire and talk with me. And they have a wonderful natural capacity for argument."

"You need not tell me that, Doctor. I know it to my sorrow, and I wish you would not encourage it. They dispute over everything, — my own orders as well as the rest. I don't approve of these night-schools, — specially for workingmen. They are a wrong to me; men cannot work all day and study at night. Some

one's right is wronged, and I'm thinking it is mine."

"If they werena in the school-room, they would be in the Change House, Laird. Which is the better?"

The laird thought in his heart that the whiskey would be more to his interest than the books, but he did not say so; there was something in Brodick's face which restrained him. Yet he continued his complaint in that half-hectoring way that always hides the white feather somewhere beneath it, until the minister said solemnly,—

"McNeil, it seems to be your work to make money. It is my work to save souls. Our roads are so far apart that we need not run against each other unless we try to."

"But I do not like the way you are doing your work, that is all, Doctor. I don't like the way."

"Mammon never did like God's ways. There is a very old disagreement between them."

"A man has a right to consider his own welfare, Brodick. I am justified in that."

"Just so, McNeil; but a man's welfare shouldna be more to him than the two tables of the law and the four gospels."

McNeil had determined at that very hour to speak to Doctor Brodick about his workers, but he was not able to make a stronger stand than this; for there was something imperial about the man when he took his stand by the humblest altar of his duty. And besides, a dim fear crept into the laird's heart that Brodick might say something to him which would make him feel uncomfortable. It was, upon the whole, better that both the minister and his conscience should be quiet at present.

And yet, perhaps, the sorest point in this interference of Brodick's was Helen. He had been too busy as yet to interfere with their alliance, but he promised himself he would do so very soon. Helen McNeil nursing sick children, and sending broths and jellies to those who could eat no coarser food, and making clothing for the old and indigent, and interesting herself in the troubles and sorrows of every cotter in the clachan, was an imposition which he was determined to put an end to. He said to himself, indignantly, that if Brodick felt he must be a kind of Providence to every idle or unfortunate family around, he had no right to impose the rules of his own conscience on Helen.

But the laird need not have troubled himself about Helen. Never had she spent so happy a year. Her days were brimful of duties. She had now no need to resort to bits of embroidery or pencil sketches, or any of the inefficient make-believes of employment with which naturally industrious women, without real work to do, attempt to pass the long hours. Her own domestic duties had been much enlarged. Guests of some kind or other were constantly at the castle. The laird's lunch must generally be sent to the new building. He kept a messenger running between it and his home, for he had a score of wants, of uncertainties, which must be settled by references Helen alone could send him.

Colin also had his claims, and he was not inclined to forego one of them. Helen must leave everything sometimes and walk with him. She must sit beside him while he took a hurried meal before some hurried journey. She must listen to all that had happened to him while he was away. She was the dear house-angel to whom he constantly looked for love and sympathy and assistance.

But amid all these claims upon her time,

those that Doctor Brodick brought were never neglected. They slipped in between, and brightened all the rest, — they were the precious ointment upon the dusty feet of daily life. She found herself often wondering how it was that Doctor Brodick, as well as Helen McNeil, had been blind and deaf to all this sweet service before George Selwyn had opened their eyes and ears to it.

If there had been any shadow in the sunshine of this year, it had come from Grizelda. Her letters during her stay in London had been full of joy and triumph; and even the laird had then hours in which he doubted if he had not been unjust to Grizelda's husband. After the season closed, the young couple had betaken themselves to Switzerland and Germany. It was while they were travelling in these countries Helen first began to notice a change in the tone of her sister's letters. She made no complaint, and they were brilliant with the atmosphere of foreign travel, luxurious and leisurely; but Helen missed something.

However, Grizelda was not in very good health; and probably, if there was a fault, it lay in the lassitude of her spirits, and in her inabil-

ity to take the same interest in what surrounded her. Helen was delighted when, in the late fall, they returned to Blairgowrie. And in spite of all her own cares, she found time to go there and superintend the adornment of the house and the arrangement of the arches of evergreens which the tenants desired to erect in honour of their return. Considering the small resources and the poverty of the people on Maxwell's estate, they made a brave attempt at the customary public welcome.

But Maxwell was scornfully indignant at what he called "the farce." His first step across his own threshold was to a muttered imprecation at the stupid folly. He made no speech, no acknowledgment of it, and looked with a sneer at Grizelda's poor, heart-failing attempt to make up for her lord's churlishness by her own smiles and courtesy.

There was an inexplicable change in her face. Helen fancied in her deprecating tone there was even a distinct element of fear. She was still lovely, but a look of fragility about her was in direct contrast to that royalty of exuberant life and beauty which had characterized Grizelda at the time of her marriage.

And Helen soon perceived that Maxwell was less suave. The laird's new enterprises were in reality a great and constant irritation to him. While he was away nothing had been said in regard to them. The grand new building rising on the Britta bluff was the greatest possible surprise to him. So were the little lobster fleet and the rapid growth of the clachan. He told McNeil that both these enterprises had been in his own mind when he bought Blairgowrie, and that he thought he might have been asked to share in the speculation.

"It was all planned five years ago, Maxwell," was the answer, "and my partner, Balfour, was the man who put the thought into my head. So, then, he had the first right to his own idea."

But Maxwell deplored his loss in the matter, and told his own lie so often that he soon heartily believed it; nor was it much later ere he began, even in Grizelda's presence, to blame his marriage for his business disappointment.

"I bought this place," he would say savagely, "that I might command a fine coast and build a summer resort, and start a lobster fishery; and I was such a fool as to let a pretty face

and a contradictory old man hurry me into a marriage. I wonder how McNeil got hold of my idea! Did I tell you, Grizelda, that these were my intentions? I am sure I must have done so;" and he looked at her in a way which she understood to be an order to confirm his insinuation.

But greatly to her own surprise, she dared to disavow his assertion. "I never heard you speak of such a thing. Some years ago my father and Mr. Balfour used to discuss the subject. I often heard them."

"Then why the Devil did you not tell me about it?" He left the room in a rage, and Grizelda buried her face in her hands and burst into passionate weeping.



## CHAPTER VII.

### A NEW SORROW.

We are not driftwood on the wave ;  
But, like the ships that tempests brave,  
Our hearts upon their voyage stand.  
We utter no unheeded cry :  
“ Where is my God ? ” Lo, He is nigh,  
And says, “ Take, child, thy Father’s hand.”

LYNCH.

A FEW days before Christmas, Grizelda had a daughter. The child lived only a few hours, and the mother lay for many weeks within the shadow of death. Indeed, on the anniversary of her marriage, the laird and Helen kept a sorrowful vigil at Blairgowrie. The young husband, white and silent, sat motionless by the fire. The laird walked slowly up and down the room. A great love and pity were struggling with a mysterious coldness and anger in his heart; the one for his apparently dying child, the other for the impassive husband

whose grief appeared to be so easily borne. Helen was by her sister's side. She had been there for many awful hours, but she knew not that her watch had lasted two long days and nights, until Grizelda's soul came back, wan, weary, from the strange solitude in which it had been fighting for a return.

It was near nightfall of the grim winter day when the father and the sister of the sick woman dared to turn homeward with a flicker of hope in their hearts. The laird was silent. Helen could see that he was nursing a grief, made bitter by suspicions of wrong. She knew his heart by her own; and yet she could not offer comfort for a sorrow which neither of them chose to voice.

They brought its shadow with them into the castle. It followed McNeil to his new building; he could not lock it out of his room; and, often as he put it down, it climbed again into his topmost thought. Yet not even to God in his most private prayer would he speak of the trouble which he foresaw. He determined not to anticipate, to hope for the best, to mistrust his own judgment. But Helen confronted the grief; and retiring with it into that solitude

which is the presence of God, she sought there counsel and comfort.

For it was evident that Grizelda was an unhappy wife, perhaps, indeed, an unkindly used one. The physicians had thought it well to forbid Maxwell the sick-room. The servants' piteous looks and eager service needed no words to interpret them. My lady had become an object of commiseration in her own home. A year ago she had ruled there like a queen of love and beauty.

As the spring came back to earth, Grizelda came back to health. Yet, old or young, in every great sickness we lose something that we never regain. Grizelda stood one morning looking mournfully in her mirror for a trace of a charm gone forever. She had lost the dew of her youth in that burning fight for life; lost that nameless, indescribable atmosphere of young years untouched by sorrow and undimmed by tears.

And her heart sank, for she knew that she held Maxwell only by the lustre and brightness of her physical beauty. Her mental qualities he held in low estimation,—he thought her a fool, and did not scruple to tell her so; while

the very purity of her morals and her lofty standard of right and wrong constantly irritated him; for Grizelda had been so rigidly trained that sin was always sin to her, — her conscience never consented to it; even in her great disobedience, the sting of it secretly wounded her love and darkened her happiest hours.

Helen watched her with tender solicitude. She went often to Blairgowrie, though she could easily feel that Maxwell disliked her visits; and with every one he threw off some particle of the restraint, due to her presence only, until one day his evil temper passed beyond his controul. He talked at Grizelda instead of to her; he sneered at her health; he kicked her pet dog out of the room; he did his best to drive her either into the mistake of open revolt, or the equal mistake of tears and complaints.

Helen was burning with anger, yet she watched her sister's behaviour with pride and approbation. Grizelda became calm as Maxwell lost his self-controul. Though she felt personally every blow given to her favourite terrier, she knew that interference would be useless, and she made no attempt to interfere.

She ignored the hard speeches she could not turn away with a polite question or remark. She did what so many hardly pressed women do, — affected to think the particular and private faults of Maxwell were the faults of all his sex, and that she was only enduring the usual fate of all married women.

Even when he left the room she did not say a word against him. With a patience and pathos Helen had never conceived of as part of Grizelda's character, she turned the conversation upon her dress, her summer plans, the visits she had to make.

"Let me show you the bonnet and mantle Walter brought me from London last week," she said. "He is so generous. I am sure the lace on them cost a great deal of money. And he is talking of taking me to Switzerland. He thinks the mountain air will give me back my roses. What do you think, Helen?"

And Helen, for very pity, admired the garment, and affected to approve of the Swiss mountains. But, oh! at the last, when they stood holding each other's hands, when they kissed each other silently, with eyes full of unshed tears, a complaint beyond all words

was made, a sympathy beyond all words given.

Still, until Grizelda spoke, Helen felt she must be silent. She had no right to force confidence, no right to make her sister's private sorrow a subject of conversation. Indeed, she respected Grizelda's reticence, and sympathized with the womanly and wifely feeling which shrank from any discussion of her husband's conduct. Maxwell had, however, no conception of so delicate a feeling. He believed the sisters spent their interviews in discussing his faults; and he had no doubt that Helen faithfully carried his wife's complaints to her father. There were days in which the suspicion pleased him, — days in which he was rude to Grizelda solely because he expected Helen to report his indignities to the laird.

For the continual sight of prosperity in which he had no share irritated him more and more. He had really come to believe himself very greatly wronged by McNeil's enterprise. The busy clachan of Edderloch, with its happy, prosperous-looking fishers; the fine hotel, where carpenters, painters, and finishers of all kinds were now busy; the cheering sounds of human

toil, well paid, and full of contentment; the entire transformation of the lonely coast filled him with envy.

He came home one day in a passion, and ordered Grizelda to be ready to leave Blairgowrie in a week.

“But where are we going, Walter?”

“Anywhere out of sight of this miserable wilderness. I wish I had never set foot in it. But we shall visit London first; so take all your fineries with you. It is not unlikely, also, that we shall never come back here. I am sick of the place, and will sell it if I can.”

She did not answer the threat, for she scarcely believed it. Yet it made her sad and anxious, for there were many times when she felt grateful for the simple sense that her father and sister were not far off, and the gray turrets of her old home almost within sight.

As the day approached for her journey, she became very unhappy. A depression she was not able to account for weighed her down, a sense of uncertainty and wrong made her fearful. She went to bid her father and Helen good-by, with a heart heavy with unformed forebodings, and her father's manner uncon-

sciously intensified the feeling. Never had he been so tender and so pitiful to her, and yet, withal, so silent and preoccupied. She wondered if he had heard anything of her trouble. She hoped he would not ask her any questions; for how could she resist his sympathy? She would weep upon his breast; she would tell him all; perhaps — perhaps she might beg never more to leave his loving care.

And as yet she could not bear to contemplate such an alternative. Maxwell was still unreasonably dear to her. To be with him for the chance of a smile or a kind word was something. Besides, there was the social shame of a separation; and Grizelda was almost foolishly sensitive to public opinion. She could suffer in silence and solitude; she could not bear to think of strangers discussing her domestic life. She shrank even from their sympathy.

When the hour of parting came, McNeil roused himself. The mournful thoughtfulness of his mood disappeared as a shadow might pass away. He watched Grizelda weeping in Helen's arms with a kind of angry pity, and then, taking her hand, he led her to his own room. She had not been in it since her bridal



night. The thought of all that had passed since made her shiver and sigh. She looked with a piteous inquiry into her father's face when he put her gently into a chair and sat down beside her.

"I have been wondering, Grizelda, whether to speak or to keep silence. Have you anything to say to me, dear?"

"No — no — I think not, dear father."

"Good girl! Keep your own counsel as long as it is possible. When you must speak, remember my ears are always open to your voice."

She clasped his hands tightly, but said not a word.

"I will ask you no questions, Grizelda. I will only tell you something. It happened a week ago. I was walking home by the fir plantation; Kinross and I were together. Just at the north corner, before we turned it, we heard some cries of distress. They were not human, and yet singularly human-like."

Grizelda covered her face with her hands. "I know what they were! Oh, I know what they were! Morag! Poor Morag!"

"Just so. The beautiful, sensitive creature

was tied to a tree, and Maxwell was lashing her. Her nostrils were flecked with a bloody foam. She was quivering and sobbing with a sense of outrage and pain, and when she saw me, she called me by a whinny as entreating and irresistible as a child's cry. I went up to your husband, and said, 'What are you beating the mare so cruelly for, Maxwell?' He was livid with passion, and he answered, 'For my own pleasure. It is none of your business.' Then Kinross said some very strong words to him; and while I soothed the poor trembling brute, Maxwell, brought to reason by the passion of Kinross, by his threats and reproaches, condescended to explain that Morag had attempted to bite him, and been disobedient both to his voice and his spur."

"Poor Morag! I have not seen her lately. She was my mare once."

"Kinross forced Maxwell to sell her to him on the spot. He would have flogged Maxwell with his own whip if he had not done so. And Maxwell knows that Kinross cannot be trifled with. It was a terrible scene, my child; and during it my thoughts were continually with you. The man who could flog a gentle, proud,

sensitive creature like Morag, could strike a woman. Oh, Grizelda, when I think of this, my blood boils ! ”

She rose and looked at him with brave eyes, though they were full of tears. “ He dare not strike me, father.”

“ If he did? ”

“ I should know how to right myself.”

“ Oh, Grizelda, be careful ! I am so in the dark, child, I cannot advise you.”

“ And I cannot make things plainer yet, father. I have not lost all hope. When he is away from here he will be a better man. If I should need a friend — ”

“ If you should need a friend — ” he went to his secretary, and took from it a small parcel. “ Money is a sure friend. Here are two thousand pounds in Bank of England notes. They are easily negotiable. Tell no one that you possess them. And you have always me and Helen ; and never forget, my ain dear one, ‘ the Friend above all others.’ ”

His voice trembled, for Grizelda was sobbing on his breast. He let her head rest there for a few moments ; he stroked her fair hair, soothed and caressed her as if she had been a little

child, and then, with a kiss, bade her a long farewell.

The season was at its height when the Maxwells reached London, and for a few weeks the various society newspapers mentioned Grizelda often enough to give her father and sister some idea of the life she was leading. But a year's interval of time makes many changes. Grizelda herself lacked the fresh charm of the bride, the glad joyousness which had attracted all to her, and newer débutantes held her former high social place. It made little matter that to the thoughtful and the wisely observant she was a really far lovelier woman. The mass of society is neither wise nor thoughtful; it does not stop to investigate changes, — it treats them at their apparent value; and undoubtedly Lady Maxwell was not the bright, brilliant, obviously beautiful woman she had been during the previous year.

Toward the close of the season there was to be a ball at the Earl of Lauder's. Lord Maxwell manifested a singular eagerness for an invitation, and an unusual regard for his wife's appearance there. He delighted Grizelda by critically examining her dress, and by his ap-

proval of it. He even complimented her upon her beauty, and drawing her to his side, kissed her with a shadow of his former tenderness. He could have taken no more effectual method to add the last grace to it. The few kind words brought a glory of colour into her cheeks; the kiss, a wonderful light into her dark blue eyes.

She took his arm with something of her old confidence, and he did not chill it by sneers and indifference. She wondered at her own happiness. She glanced with such shy pleasure into his face that even his hard heart was smitten with a moment's remorse for the unnecessary suffering he had caused her. It was so easy to make her beautiful and glad that he almost thought it would be worth his while to do so.

After dancing some time she became suddenly weary, and her partner took her to a small couch a little aside from the moving throng. For a few minutes she was left unattended, and a shadow of sadness came into her face. It came from her heart, which was vaguely reminding her that she was weaker, less buoyant in step, less attractive altogether than she had once been. Into this thought a name was dropped, — a name she had never before heard,

and yet which gave her a shock, and affected her as if some interior voice had said at the same moment, "Beware!"

"Miss Julia Casselis!"

She said it over to herself; and when her partner returned to her, she asked if Miss Casselis was present.

"Have you not seen her? Stand a little this side and you will have the pleasure. She is more than usually fascinating to-night. Ah! Lord Maxwell is dancing with her, I see. I believe, indeed, they are very old friends."

He went on talking of Casselis Court, and Maxwell's old friendship with the family, and a score of other things in which the two names were blended. Grizelda heard the words as a wandering accompaniment to her own far more vivid thoughts, for she knew the look upon her husband's face. She had seen him bend to her in the same winning manner when he had wooed her from her duty and her home in the Edderloch fir wood.

She had parted from him with a smile. When they met again, his face was dark and his manner cold. He gave her his arm until they reached their carriage; then he withdrew him-

self as completely from her sympathy as if they were thousands of miles apart. Grizelda did not dare to talk. She saw that he had shut himself in a revery which he would not permit her to enter; and when the weary drive was over she went to her room, sick with the unkind disappointment, and trembling with the prescience of coming sorrow.

She had no heart left; her long silk garments trailed up the broad stairway as if they felt the weight of its despair. Her maid was not present, and she did not call her. She was glad to be alone. She fastened the door of her room, and stood still with her hands locked, and downcast, to collect her shocked and scattered thoughts. The gray dawn creeping into the room was not more wan than her face; and the moonlight beauty of the pearls around her throat and wrists added a strange pathos to her bewilderment of grief. She had forgotten them. At that moment all the externals of life were forgotten.

She was only conscious of the misery in her heart; of the yearning for the love that was lost; of one sorrow answering to another sorrow, until her whole nature longed and ached for

some word of comfort. Then she remembered the words of her father. But it was neither to him nor to Helen she would go. Only the Friend above all others could help her in this hour.

There was a beautiful little engraving of the Man of Sorrows on the wall. It had been George Selwyn's bridal gift to her, and more than once it had been strangely blent with those tokens of comfort which are among the secret things not uncommon in the experience of the loved children whom God chastens. A glimmer of the dawn was on the pale uplifted face, and on the crown of thorns; and as she stood with the sad question of her heart before it, she remembered suddenly some lines Selwyn very often repeated, —

“The old and gray who travel wearily,  
All who lack bread, all who strive and sigh,  
Each motherless little one,  
Mothers whose little ones are in the sky,  
No pain is pain while Thou art nigh !”

and with the words a sense of consolation and strength came to her. She knew not how, for in mystery each soul abides; yet she surely felt that with Him nigh, all sorrow might be borne, and that —

“The tasks in hours of insight willed,  
Can be through hours of gloom fulfilled.”



## CHAPTER VIII.

### BROKEN PLANS.

Thus deluges, descending on the plains,  
Sweep o'er the yellow year, destroy the pains  
Of lab'ring oxen and the peasant's gains.  
The shepherd climbs the cliff, and sees from far  
The wasteful ravage of the wat'ry war  
Bear down the dams with unresisted sway,  
And sweep the cattle and the cots away.

DRYDEN.

Death cried, "Thou canst not walk, but I can carry."

ONE evening early in the following August, the laird and the minister were walking together from the new hotel. It was nearly ready for the furnishing and plenishing, and the laird was very proud of the excellent way in which all had been wrought.

"No half-and-half work there," he said, looking backward to the building. "I examined every stone and every plank with my own eyes. I like all my work to be done at the first time, — no patching up afterward."

"If you do not watch yourself better, Laird, you will fall and sink altogether to the level of your age, — to keeping an hotel and making a trifle of money, and the like o' that."

"You have your own schemes too, Brodick, and you are just as proud of them as I am of mine. While we are in this world we must fash with this world; and until you yourself are more than a man, dinna throw stones at me."

"It matters something, Laird, as to the things we fash about. I trust I am busy for the good of others. I wouldn't think much of my work if it was just for myself."

"You have a habit of talking of my work as if it was a kind of new-fangled idea for money-making which my forefathers would have thought scorn of. Now, I hope I know the McNeils better than you do, and I am particularly well satisfied that all of them were for money-getting in the way possible to their day and generation. They lifted cattle and harried their neighbours because there were no English stravinging up the Highlands them days. I shall take my toll, of course, from men coming through my country, but I shall give them good food and lodging for it. And it is not you that ought to object

to new ways; you have more of them than the college that licensed you would like, minister."

"Colleges don't know everything, Laird. They make divines; they don't make ministers. It is the poor and the sick and the sorrowful that make ministers."

"We should have miserable theologians from poor folk and sick folk, Brodick."

"Ay, Laird; but if men are to be good theologians before they are good Christians, our blessed heaven will be empty."

"I dislike new ideas in religion; religion is not a progressive science like —"

"Like money-making? You are wrong, McNeil. Religion is progressive. The faith of Christ is meant to fit every age. Its ways of working must therefore conform to every age. The McNeils are not surely the sole inheritors of that freedom."

"I know well what you are after, minister. You have got a new kirk on your brain now; I heard of it from Helen."

"The old one will not seat half the village, and when the hotel is opened next year, where are the people in it to worship? For

the week days you offer them shooting and fishing and sport of all kinds; what about the Sabbath?"

"It is not likely many of them will want to come to an established church. If you take ten Scotchmen from anywhere, you will find nine of them smitten with dissent of some kind; and as for Englishmen, they dinna think a church is a church unless it be the unadulterated Church of England. Why, Brodick, you have not been able to get your own parishioners to worship together yet!"

"They are drawing nearer to it, Laird."

"Not they! You could as easy move Ben Cruachan across to Ben More as you could get Gael and Lowlander to call each other brother."

"We are told, McNeil, that mountains can be moved by faith. Why not, then, by love? I am a servant of God. I do not think it any presumption to expect impossibilities."

"Well, Brodick, a new kirk is just an impossibility—but thanks be! the castle is in sight, and I'm glad, for your conversation has not been as pleasant as usual. Don't turn your own way, Brodick. Come in, man, and let us have a bite of sup together."

“There is going to be a storm soon, Laird; there’s no mistaking that old, mysterious, hungering sound in the waves.”

McNeil turned and looked over them. “You are right, Brodick. The black clouds are gathering in the west, and it is growing dark much quicker than it should do.”

“‘I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it,’—that is what God said to his servant Job anent such a sea as we are now looking at. Oh, McNeil, how miserably small are our grandest works when we see the Almighty with our ain eyes clothing the sea in clouds, and binding it in the thick darkness, and setting bars and doors before it, so that if a storm comes we know that here its proud waves will be stayed!”

“We are not God Almighty, Brodick; and we are not called upon to measure our works with His works. You are wonderful sombre to-night. Come in, and Colin and Helen will maybe suit you better than myself.”

Colin and Helen stood together at the window watching the gathering clouds. His arm was around her. Her fair head was against his shoulder, and his dark, handsome face was bent

toward it. They had been talking of Grizelda, and Helen's eyes had a troubled look. The laird noticed it at once, and felt an unpleasant chill when Colin answered thus his query as to what they had been worrying about: —

“There is no letter again from Grizelda, and Helen fears she is ill.”

“Where was the last from?”

“From Venice. She said they were going to Rome to spend the winter.”

“Very well; letters do not come from Rome as the crow flies. There will be delays at both ends, and all the way too. Colin, you are a poor lover to let your betrothed weep for anything; you should smile away her fears, my lad.”

“He does far better, father; he shares them with me.”

“Uncle, I was saying to Helen that if you were willing we might be married next month, and take our wedding trip to Rome; we should see Grizelda then.”

“It is a very good idea,” answered the minister.

“You are none of you thinking of me. What shall I do here by myself through the long months?”

"Why, Laird, you have the new hotel. It has been your life for the last two years or more. You had better get the wedding past, and throw the doors open. When all the world is coming to Edderloch you'll have no time to fash your head with such a small matter as two young things loving each other."

"You are in a most uncomfortable temper to-night, Brodick; but, good-will or ill-will, your words have a grain of wisdom in them."

Then, supper being ready, they drew around the table, and finished the discussion over it. But such opposition as the laird made was feeble. He was himself uneasy about Grizelda. He had long seen that Colin's importunity for an early marriage would have to be submitted to, and he had become so fond of Colin that the surrender of Helen to him was not in his imagination so painful as it had once been.

For as to any actual surrender of the comfort of her continual presence, there was no question of that. There would be no change in his home, in its beautiful order and ordering. And Helen had never neglected his lightest wish or put her lover one moment before him. He had no fear that to a husband he would have

to resign the smallest tittle of his rights as a father.

So after a hesitation which was mostly assumed, he agreed to Colin's proposal. The marriage was to take place some time in October, and after it, Colin and Helen were to go directly to Rome. And when the decision was really made, McNeil felt a positive satisfaction in it. He had not understood until now what an ever-present fear and care Grizelda was in his heart. But he had never been able to rid himself of the scene between Maxwell and the mare Morag, and with the shameful memory there always came a torturing terror lest his child, his daughter, was in the physical power of a natural human brute. He tried to deny the possibility of such a terror; to oppose to it reason and the social conditions of society; but it laughed at his limping logic, and the struggle only gave it added energy. For whether a man resists a fear or succumbs to it, the very fact of measuring himself against it insures its hold upon him.

And while this conversation was going on, the threatened storm broke. The terror-stricken rain flung itself wildly against the windows; the



wind went howling around the castle, clamouring at every ancient door for admission. The great sea's eternal roar filled the old rooms with an echo that it soon became impossible to interrupt. The laird and Brodick crept close to the fire and smoked their pipes to monosyllables. Colin and Helen sat together in the background. The tie between them had been drawn closer that night, but a strange depression prevented them from discussing it further. Both noticed the melancholy, and both tried to explain it.

"It is not in my heart, Helen," said Colin; "for I am the happiest man alive."

"It is I who am to blame, dear Colin. The moaning and roaring of the waves always make me sad. When I was a girl I fancied they told me ghastly tales of what was happening in the storm, and I used to steal away to sleep with a pain in my heart."

The storm continued for a week. It flooded the harvest fields and made the bogs and moors impassable. The wretched old turf-and-stone cottages in the village were very inefficient shelters. The people were constantly wet; and even in the new cottages there was great discomfort and suffering. They had been built

without any drainage, though natural facilities for drainage were in sight.

The laird found it impossible to reach his work and workers, and was cross and apprehensive of all sorts of wrong and misfortune. The minister found it impossible to relieve one-half of the suffering and necessity brought to him, and he was irritated by his inabilities. Only Colin and Helen found some vital interest which the storm had not interfered with.

But no storms last forever. In ten days all was going on again as if sunshine was the perpetual right of earth. The laird had found all well at the building. The deep foundation, the excellent materials and fine workmanship had stood the test of the elements. McNeil's heart was settled now. He had often feared that the lofty situation chosen might be a dangerous one; but his building had been tried by an unusually long and furious storm, and had not lost a roof-slate. So that now, when the sun was shining again over the dark day-shine of the sea and the pillared rocks and the heathery hills, he could not help feeling a kind of satisfaction in the tempest which had brought him so comfortable an assurance.

Besides, a new thought had come into his mind. For the next generation of the McNeils he would build a grander home. The old castle was very dear to him, but it could be made much larger, and more stately in form, and much more magnificent in the interior. In fact, the passion of dabbling in stone and mortar had taken possession of the laird, and he felt as if life would lack something important when he had no building on hand and no workmen to look after.

As it happened, his architect paid him a visit while the thought was simmering in his mind. The possibilities of the castle were thoroughly examined, the additions and alterations decided on, and McNeil's heart was uplifted with the idea of the house he would leave to those who would come after him. He thought of himself as the second McNeil,—the founder of the family upon circumstances suited to the aims and genius of the nineteenth century. He felt as if in the land of shadows the McNeil who had first built their home would greet him with a peculiar approbation and affection. He stepped proudly about the old rooms to his ambitious thoughts; and Colin and Helen, happily busy

about their bridal arrangements, were glad of the new interest that he had called into his life.

So the pleasant weeks went by, and there was no sorrow in them, nor yet any shadow or presentiment of sorrow. A letter from Grizelda, dated Rome, had lulled such fears regarding her as were spoken of; those which lay at the bottom of each heart did not interfere with the visible happy routine of daily life.

The laird had determined to make his daughter Helen's marriage a notable event. The festivities at Grizelda's had been in a manner forced and formal ones, in which the bride had taken little interest and which had simply been got through with by himself because the family name and family feeling demanded them.

But Helen's marriage would be the realization of his pet plans and hopes. He loved Colin, and thought him as worthy of Helen as any mere mortal could be. Their union was in every way a fit one; and he was resolved to show the McNeils, who had not thought much of Grizelda's wedding-feast, that when the occasion was worthy of it, he knew how to rejoice royally with his kindred. And he also had a very decided feeling of pleasure in the prospect

of astonishing them with the improvements he had made on the estate.

The castle was in a manner renovated for the event. Rooms that had not been used for a generation were thrown open and refurnished; the uneven black oak floors were covered with rich carpets; the ill-fitting windows shielded with draperies of heavy velvet; antique chairs and sofas were recovered; polishers, paperers and gilders were brought from Glasgow to make the ancient rooms a fit residence for a young and lovely bride.

Helen and Colin found in all these changes hourly cause for delightful hopes and confidences. Helen had all a woman's delight in a delightful home. Every fresh ornament pleased her. The disposition of every piece of furniture, the hanging of every picture, was an event to the lovers. Two chaffinches building their spring nests among the apple blossoms were never happier than those two loving mortals, arranging together their future home.

In the matter, also, of Helen's wardrobe, the laird had been singularly thoughtful and generous. Boxes bearing wedding garments of

all kinds were continually arriving, and Colin knew that whenever he should go to Glasgow to purchase his bride jewels, he would carry with him an order from the laird for diamonds of great worth. So, although September was an unusually rainy month, there was a perpetual sunshine of love and hope in the castle.

At the end of September, Colin went to Glasgow to make the last purchases and arrangements. It seemed to Helen as if he took with him all the rare, sweet atmosphere in which she had been living for a little while. A sudden sense of suspended duties gave her a feeling of remorse. She remembered how seldom Doctor Brodick had been to speak to her, and how little interest she had taken in her usual village work.

The thought was a premonition, for ere it had passed away, she saw the minister coming. Not at his usual thoughtful pace, but with the rapid steps of a man urged by some powerful reason, and full of a determined purpose. She glanced at her father, who was sitting by the hearth, taking his after-dinner pipe and glass of toddy. He had received that morning the first draught of the plans for the enlargement

of the castle, and he was musing with pride and contentment on their anticipated splendour.

He greeted Brodick with a peculiar kindness, and held his hand with a hearty grip; for he loved the man, and was not happy in any purpose till he had discussed it with him, and if possible secured his active sympathy.

“Sit down beside me, Brodick. There is not a man in the world I would rather see at this hour. Helen, my bird, call for the minister’s pipe and glass.”

He was so full of his own plans he did not notice that Brodick’s cheeks had on them the red spot which always indicated his anger; nor yet that his manner was full of stern preoccupation. The laird at that moment could see nothing but the magnificent turrets of his projected home, with the ensign of the McNeils floating loftily from it; and as the specifications lay beside him, he opened them proudly, and began to explain their purport to his old friend.

Brodick looked at them a moment with gathering anger; then he pushed them passionately away and cried out, —

“I dare not look at them, Laird! I dare not



look at them! Do you know that there are fourteen cases of typhus in those cottages you built? Do you remember what George Selwyn said about the right of the labourer to pure air and pure water? I knew he was right then, and yet — oh God, forgive me! — I let you take your own way. Six little bits of bairns and their two mothers, and six of your best fishermen. You must away instanter for doctors and medicine, and such things as are needful. There is not a minute to lose, Laird!”

Helen had risen while the minister was speaking, and there was a calm determination about her manner which frightened her father. He did not answer Brodick; he turned to his daughter.

“Helen McNeil, where are you going?”

“To the village. I know something of nursing the sick. I can give a little help until better help is got.”

“Sit down! sit down! Bide where you are; I will do whatever Brodick tells me to do.”

Then he turned angrily to the minister.

“You are aye bringing me bad news. Am I to blame if fever comes? Is life and death in my hand?”



"You are to blame, McNeil; very much to blame."

"Brodict, keep to your own text. I say the cottages are good ones. If men and women are lazy and dirty, and give fever an invite into their homes, can I help it?"

"'Am I my brother's keeper?' It is an old question, an old excuse, Laird. The first murderer asked it and pleaded it. I am bound to say that you are to blame. When you did not give the cottages good drainage and plenty of pure water, you asked fever into them; and I will not hear you lay it to the Almighty. You should have built as George Selwyn advised you to build."

"Name not that man to me! I hate him! What did he come here for? He has brought me nothing but trouble. And I will not be hectored by you either, Doctor, as if I was a bad bairn. Say what I must do, and I'll do it, if it is anything in reason: only, Helen shall not leave the castle; that is sure as death! Sit down, Helen. Send all the wine and dainties you like to; but I forbid you to put a foot over the threshold of the castle."

"I am not asking for Helen. There is

nothing she could do now that some old crone in the village cannot do better."

"Do or not do, Helen will bide just where she is. I will count you my enemy for evermore if you set any other duty but my word before her."

The laird's anger was in its way quite as authoritative as the minister's, and Helen signified her assent to his order by a kiss which somehow sent a pang into his heart and a sob into his throat. He put on his hat and went out with Brodick. It was a bitterly annoying interruption to all his pleasant dreaming. And Brodick's self-reproaches were his own self-reproaches, though he resented them, even while he acknowledged their justice.

"I wish now that I had built differently. You should have urged me more, Brodick. If you had put it to me as a matter of right and wrong, you know I would have minded you."

"Oh, Laird, my own conscience is enough this day."

"You should have made me do right. You should have been more determined with me."

It was not at all likely that McNeil would

have listened to any advice on the subject; it was even probable that urging would have only made him more stubbornly against such slight improvements as had been made, but it relieved McNeil to think he would have listened to reason, and besides, he had a sort of angry satisfaction in augmenting the trouble of the minister's conscience.

This was the beginning of evil days. It soon became evident that the wedding would have to be postponed. Guests could hardly be invited to a village plague-stricken in every household; and the suffering and mourning were so great and so general that the very idea of festivity amid it was unnatural and revolting.

Colin alone had a moment's contemplation of it. He thought it would be well to have a very quiet and private ceremony, and take Helen away from the infected locality; but Helen would not permit the suggestion to be made.

"I should be selfish indeed," she said, "to leave my father alone in his trouble; and I should be haunted by the constant fear of his death. Besides, Colin dear, our marriage was to be such a great pleasure to him. We may not care for the company and the stir of the

wedding-feast, but he thinks so much of it. If we are married quietly for our own pleasure or safety, I should always feel as if we had defrauded him of a joy he could never have again. An old man's disappointment counts double, I think, Colin."

And Colin kissed her fondly. He had no wish but her wish; for she had continually taught him by her sweet unselfishness that neither men nor women can live for themselves a life worth living, — that all the flowers of love and happiness blow double.

## CHAPTER IX.

### PARTING.

She bought with price of purest breath a grave among the eternal.

They parted, yet they love ;  
And shall these spirits in an air serene,  
Where nought can shadow, nought can come between,  
Meet once again, and to the other grow  
More close and sure than could have been below ?

**D**URING the following six weeks, Brodick's efforts were almost superhuman. He was doctor and nurse and cook. He carried the wailing babies and held the raving men in his strong arms. He watched over the sick till the last hope had fled ; he buried them tenderly when life was over. The splendour of the man's humanity had never shown itself until it stood erect, and feared not though the pestilence that walked in darkness and the destruction that wasted at noon-day were around him on every side.

McNeil also in this extremity rose nobly to the topmost level of what he conceived to

be his duty. Plenty of people are willing to play the Good Samaritan without the oil and twopence; but that was not the laird's way. Brodick's outspoken blame had really made him tremble at his new responsibilities. He put his hand in his pocket and liberally helped the sufferers. Nor, unless all our own motives ring clear throughout, must we blame him too much if, at the foundation of all his efforts at atonement, lay one haunting thought, — Helen ! If he did what he could for others, Helen would be safer. He never audibly admitted that Helen was in danger; but — but, if there should be danger, he was, he hoped, paying a ransom for her safety.

Toward the end of October the epidemic appeared to have spent itself. Men began to creep into the sunshine, and to handle their nets with wasted and trembling hands. White-faced women counted their children, and wept because of those that were not. Boys and girls, with a strange stillness about them, played their games softly in the twilight, and then sat down to whisper together of the dread things that had been seen and heard in the fever-time.

The laird tried, as far as possible, to resume his usual life; but there was still a shadow on the minister's face, and he knew himself that there was a shadow on his heart. Was it from the still solemnity of death in which he had lately lived so much, or was it the shadow of a coming instead of a departing sorrow?

One afternoon Brodick thought he would go and sit with Helen a little while. During his close intimacy with the cotters he had learned many things about their daily life which would materially alter his methods of working for their welfare; and of these changes he wished to talk with Helen. The preparations for her marriage were being slowly renewed, and if she went, as previously determined upon, to Rome for the winter, there would be few other opportunities for consultation until her return. She was just going to take a walk on the moor, and he joined her.

"Colin has gone to Glasgow," she said. "My father had some business he desired him to attend to before we go away."

"Yes, dear. Is your wedding-day fixed, Helen?"

"On the eleventh of November, if God will."

"You are sad, my child."

"Am I? I thought, indeed, how sad your face was."

The day was itself mournful and gray, even for a November day. The purple glory of the heather was all gone. The wood was a sombre, silent realm of leafless trees; and a chill breath of wind shivered through it and made Helen draw her wrap closer around her throat. The rocky shore, the black seaboard, the scaly fish-boats, the jetties thick with kelp and tangle made a dreary picture.

And in spite of the doctor's intention to talk to Helen of work to be done in the future, he could not say a word of it though it was a subject that filled his heart. A pathetic silence fell between them, and he was not able to break it. As for Helen, she walked on with a step a little dragging, and with eyes mournfully fixed on the tossing waves.

"They never rest! Neither in sunshine nor in moonshine do they know the blessedness of perfect sleep."

Her voice had a wistful weariness in it. The doctor looked sharply at her. "Helen, my dear, are you quite well?"



"I have not been quite well for two weeks. I had a strange dream last night. Doctor, if I should die, comfort my father and Colin."

Her words fell on his ear like words that he had been expecting. He realized in a moment they were the words he had been fearful of hearing. A terror he could not put down made him speechless, but he took her hands and felt that they were burning with fever.

"Let us go home, Doctor."

She turned with the words and gave one long, mournful look at the mountains and the sea and the lonely brown stretch of moorland. She was bidding farewell to them: the soul has marvellous intuitions, and Brodick was aware of it. Yet he had not a word to say to her; there are spiritual moods beyond all human intermeddling.

The silence was broken by Helen.

"Doctor, when your heart sinks, and is full of doubts, and when the road is dark before you, what do you do?"

"He that carried our sins can surely carry our doubts; nay, but, my dear girl, as He carries lambs like you in His arms, is there any

need to trouble yourself what kind of road is before you? You cannot get tired in His arms, you cannot miss your way, you cannot be frightened by anything, not even by death, for He *is* Eternal Life."

She looked into his face with the grave gladness of one that has grasped the hand of a friend.

"You said you had a strange dream, Helen?"

"Yes, a dream — a vision — I know not how to speak of it. Could a mortal being see one that is immortal? If I said that I had seen an angel, would you believe me?"

"Yes; for the angels of the Lord encamp round about them that fear Him; and those who come into the reception of heavenly things, Helen, come also into the companionship with heavenly beings. Infusions of light and comfort, inward helps that bless us when we are not looking for them, intimations, holy thoughts, suggestions of purity and beauty, desires after God, motions of that hidden fire we call prayer,—how come they, Helen? I will tell you. Good minds are joined to holier minds, and the angels of God still ascend and descend, ministering to those who love Him."

"I would tell you what I saw and what I heard, but I cannot find the words."

"To you only was the message, Helen. They who have to hear understand; they who have not to hear cannot understand."

They were by this time in the castle garden. Helen stooped and touched gently the few last flowers blooming there, — a cluster of golden chrysanthemums; and the laird, who had seen them coming, opened the door wide to welcome them. Alas! alas! though he saw him not, Death entered with them.

At midnight there was the old, old cry of despair and anguish, the hurrying for help where no help could avail, the desolation of a terror creeping hour by hour closer to the hearthstone; for Helen lay in a stupour while the fever burned her young life away, and the laird was stricken with a stony grief, deaf to all consolation. He wandered up and down, wringing his hands, and crying out at intervals like a man in mortal agony.

Brodick had felt from the first that there was no hope. Something in the girl's face that last afternoon they walked together had impressed him more than her words and man-

ner. Her soul was looking out from it, a little sad, a little wistful and wondering; silent, and yet restless, as the birds are silent and restless just before they leave their summer nests and depart for a land that is very far off. They dream of its sunshine and beauty, they are ready to go; but, oh! the long flight over the cruel sea, where there will be no rest for their weary wings.

And during that last mournful walk the minister had seen, also, that she had dropped from her care and thought all relating to her marriage and her future. The subject interested her no more than the toy which a child has outgrown interests it. Life, with its joys and sorrows, was already over; she knew that she was going the way of all the earth; and though heaven had opened to her, and she had undoubtedly had some vision of its beauty, that unknown thing, the passage between the two lands, frightened her.

Toward the close of her life she became almost radiantly conscious, and radiantly happy. Holding Colin's hand, she had not one regretful thought for the earthly life they were to have shared together. Loving him with the sweetest tenderness, she felt it no wrong to desire for

that love rather the tryst of eternity than the fruition of time.

She went away very early in the morning, just when the horizon was beginning to redden and the earliest robins to twitter in the wood. Colin, with sorrow-haunted, tearless eyes, stood watching her. The laird, bravely struggling with his grief, knelt silently at her side. Brodick also was there, and a few of the oldest servants; but not a word or a movement broke the divine stillness of the death-room.

It was at this moment Helen said quite clearly, —

“Father!”

“I am here, Helen.”

“There is a paper in my jewel-box on the table.”

He went and got it. It was only a small strip, folded crosswise.

“Read it when I am beyond all pain. I shall trust you, father! Colin, dear! Doctor Brodick!”

Colin could not speak. The minister stooped, and said softly, —

“Is it well, Helen? Do you feel the bonds of death, my child?”

"I trust in those pierced hands that have broken the bonds of death. Oh, breadth! Oh, depth! Oh, boundless length! Oh, inaccessible height! Oh, Christ's love!"

The mystical gray shadow stole over her face at these last words. Brodick stood praying with lifted hands. It was soon all past, —

"She had outsoared the shadow of our night,  
And that unrest which men miscall delight."

They dressed her in her bridal gown, and, three days afterward, laid her among the generations of her people, — the fighting thanes of the olden years, the brides and widows and children of the McNeils for many a century. Her kindred on the other side were far greater, far more numerous than those in the earthly home she had left.

And the poor, heart-broken father thought of this, and derived a strange comfort from the thought.

"They were good men, according to their lights," he said to Colin; "rough men, doubtless, but aye ready to stand up for the faith and the right. And their women would have the sorrows of women, and their consolations.

Thank God! Helen will not be without her ain folk; and even there they'll be nearer than other folk. Eh, Colin?"

The young man answered only with passionate tears and sobs. The words had broken down the flood gates of his sorrow. The laird looked at him almost with envy. The eyes grow dry as we grow old, tears are further away; and oh! how we miss the soft rain that soothes the bitterness of woe, and makes it possible for the desert places of the heart to grow green and beautiful again.

McNeil had not wept at her grave. He could not weep for his child, and he could not forget her. For who can say to the heart, Thou shalt not remember? And would he have said it? Did the thought of a prolonged sorrow have a certain vague terror for him? Was there in his secret soul a determination to make the best of what had happened, — to say, what is finished is finished, and the dead are dead?

No; McNeil had far too loyal and tender a heart to accept the comfort of this practical stoicism, this secret defiance of God's will. He cherished the memory of his child by night and day. Cherished it though it always came

with a charge which lay like a stone upon his heart, — a heavy trust which he dare not destroy, and which he was determined not to accept.

It was in the strip of paper he had taken from Helen's dying fingers. It was only a few words, but the request in them was so stupendous it haunted him constantly for an answer.

DEAR FATHER, — Whatever you intended to give me personally, give it, I entreat you, to God's poor.

HELEN.

To give to the poor all the thousands which he had intended to give to Helen! He could not do it! He could not do it! Helen had not known what she was asking. It was a dying sentiment in her to wish it; and it would be a foolish superstition in him to regard it. But, oh, how that slip of paper tortured him! He put it away in the most secret drawer of his secretary, but he could not hide it. His spiritual eyes saw it clearly and continually, saw it in the broad noontide, saw it in the dark midnight, saw it when he sat talking with Colin by his fireside, saw it when he lay on his bed in the loneliness of his own room.

And as it happened, he had not the distrac-



tion which the oversight of a number of men had given him for nearly two years. When the fever became epidemic, the craftsmen on the new hotel had been dismissed, and work on the building stopped until the spring. Little was to be done now but the last finishing and the furnishing, and for these things there would be ample time before the season for opening it arrived.

So that he had no special employment for his hours. He wandered about the castle, and on fine days persuaded Colin to go to the moors with him. But neither of the men shot anything. They walked mournfully about an hour or two, and came home chilled and thoroughly depressed with the bleak hopelessness of their tramp. For neither the laird nor Colin was inclined to talk of Helen. Both jealously guarded their own memories of the dead girl. Their sorrow was yet too selfish to share.

But toward Christmas these solitary reminiscences had to give place in some measure to a real, active, living anxiety, in which both participated. Grizelda had been informed of her sister's death, and had written a long, heart-

broken and heart-breaking letter to her father, in which she bitterly complained of her inability to come to him in his loneliness and sorrow. "He won't let me! He won't let me! I cannot leave without his permission! He would bring me back, if I were at the gate of the castle." The whole letter was the cry of a soul almost in an extremity of anguish, and Colin had roused himself to say some very decided words about his cousin's position.

True, she was drinking the cup her own hands had mingled; but that was the last of Colin's meditations on the subject. He thought of her as Helen's sister, as his own cousin, as the young girl who had been his companion and friend; he recalled her beauty, her good-nature, her gay temper and pretty accomplishments; and then he thought of Maxwell. He was angry at himself that he had ever said a word in his favour; he remembered now many doubts and suspicions against him to which it would have been well had he given heed and speech. It made him burn with indignation to know that Grizelda was in the power of such a man.

On Christmas day the laird and he, after

their dinner, sat down together. The laird was on one side of the hearth; Colin was on the other. They were quite silent for a long time, then Colin, who had been thinking of Grizelda in the manner indicated, suddenly rose, and walking impatiently about the half-lit room said:

"I want to go to Rome, uncle. I have been thinking of Grizelda until I am scarcely master of myself. I am sure she is in great trouble."

"Poor Grizelda! It is just two years since she was married. A sad thing! a sad thing!"

"And a year ago she lay at the point of death! Where is she now? In what circumstances? We have not heard a word from her since that pitiful letter after —"

"I know! I remember it! I thought that day a living sorrow was maybe worse than a dead one."

"Shall I go and see her? I am ready at any hour."

"I wish you would, Colin, I wish you would; still, we had better ask what Brodick thinks. It isn't a light thing to come ever so little between a man and his wife unless there are reasons overt, and not to be denied; then who would go for my child quicker than I

would? And who would meet that cowardly, cruel wretch as gladly?"

"And he seemed to me, when I first knew him, so handsome and agreeable, I thought him a very fair man."

"I wonder at it, Colin. Handsome as he was, I saw the imbruted serpent of selfishness in him. I saw the cruelty of the wolf in him. I saw, also, that he was full of vulpine cunning. Even the gentle Christ called such a one a fox."

"Patience, Laird, patience! Who are you calling ill names at the Christmas-tide?"

It was the minister who spoke. He had entered unobserved by the excited father, and, in spite of his protestations, had listened with sympathy to his opinion of Maxwell.

"I was speaking of my fine son-in-law. Colin thought him a very fair man once."

"We have to take men as they seem to be, uncle; and, after all, what is a man?"

"I'll tell you what God calls a man: 'One that executeth judgment, and seeketh the truth.'"

"What think you, Brodick, of Colin going his ain self to see after Grizelda?"

“It is what he ought to do, and the sooner the better. It will be good for Colin, too.”

“I am ready to go for Grizelda’s sake, for I believe her to be in trouble. My own trouble can never be healed.”

“My dear lad, the hand of Time, which is always the hand of God, will bring you resignation — yea, even happiness. ‘For He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.’”

## CHAPTER X.

### GRIZELDA'S HUSBAND.

My life  
Has been a golden dream of love ;  
But now I wake, I 'm like a merchant roused  
From soft repose to see his vessel sinking,  
And all his wealth cast o'er.

DRYDEN.

TWO things were known about Grizelda. She was in Rome, and she was unhappy. But no one in Edderloch suspected the true cause of her unhappiness. The circumstances which had made her so miserable at the Earl of Lauder's ball, the very existence of Miss Julia Casselis, she had kept in her own heart ; though often in the lonely misery of the months that followed, she longed to write to Helen, and ask her for comfort and counsel.

But such a longing was always powerfully combated, and finally conquered, by the pride and reticence of her nature. She did not wish even Helen to know how miserably she had

been deceived, how quickly the punishment of her disobedience had found her out, how truly she was repenting at her leisure the marriage so hastily and wilfully contracted. If she had only granted her father's final request, and waited one year, she had told herself over and over, it would have saved her a lifetime of sorrow.

And it was not only in this negative way she looked at it. She felt that she might also have been very, very happy under other circumstances. Maxwell not only gave her shame and sorrow; he prevented her enjoying the days of her youth and beauty. He chilled all her little triumphs. He deprived her of all the reasonable *éclat* and pleasure which are the natural results of her position. And the preventers of happiness are the cruellest of all tyrants. Afflictions from the hand of God, troubles that are independent of will, and beyond controul, may be endured with resignation; but, oh, how resentful the heart feels to those who wilfully and maliciously destroy the daily happiness which has been lovingly trusted to them!

It was in this direction Grizelda's bitterest feelings lay. She was young; she was beauti-

ful; she was well-born; she had all the natural and accidental requirements necessary to make her a happy woman. Every day and every hour Maxwell trampled upon them. After he renewed his acquaintance with Miss Casselis, Grizelda soon abandoned all hope of regaining her influence over him. A distant relationship and an old intimacy gave him numberless opportunities and favours; and he pressed these with such tact and zeal that he soon became an invaluable aid and confidant, not only to Miss Casselis, but also to the Countess of Lauder.

They consulted with him on all occasions. If they had an appointment at their modiste's or a necessity to shop, he was their patient cavalier on all such tiresome excursions. If there was a dinner or a ball at Lauder House, Maxwell assisted them to arrange its details. If they went visiting, they looked to him for those little attentions which give a certain dignity and respect to visiting ladies. If they rode, he was generally their escort.

The countess did not even think it necessary to call on Grizelda. A country girl, the daughter of a Scotch laird, without a penny of



fortune ! How she pitied poor Maxwell to her friends ! Such a drawback on a promising young man. It was too bad. How did it happen ? Oh, a summer in some Scotch wilderness, where Maxwell had bought an estate ; a pretty face, contiguity, and nothing else to do. Half the miserable and unsuitable marriages there are come from such elements, she sighed. Was Lady Maxwell in London ? Yes. A fretful, nervous invalid ; made a very good appearance in her first season, but could not stand the demands of fashionable life. These poor country gentry never could. A person must be born in the purple to endure the weight and strain of it.

Nor was the Countess Lauder at all ill-natured in her remarks. Her scornful pity was not for Grizelda personally ; it was for the weakness of all the men and women who promoted such a set of uncomfortable and unsuitable circumstances. Julia indorsed her aunt's opinions with the generality of Maxwell's discussers ; to himself she gave the much more seductive sympathy of sighs and smiles, and a comforting familiarity, which was easily excused on the ground of their distant cousinship, old acquaint-

tance, and pity for the matrimonial blunder which he had made.

Such a course of treatment would have shaken the loyalty of an affectionate husband, but when the husband was at heart disloyal its effect was completely destructive. And perhaps the saddest part of all such wrongs to a wife is that they do not go steadily, rapidly, and unrelentingly on to their legitimate end.

Maxwell's shadowy remorse, his moments of pity, his passing fits of what he chose to call love, gave the poor wife attacks of baseless hope, which were worse than attacks of fever. If he smiled at her, if he spoke with anything like courtesy, if he spoke at all, if he asked her to accompany him to any public place or entertainment, all Grizelda's anger vanished; she forgave him at once, though she only provoked his contempt by suffering him to see how happy he made her.

And in these torturing alternations and suspenses she had no human friend or confidant. Some sad wives, in a situation so lonely and trying, have found a silent or expressed comfort in the sympathy of the servant in their immediate attendance. But it was a part of Lord

Maxwell's domestic tyranny to be continually changing Grizelda's maid. He had no mind to be talked over by two women. Besides, no one knew into what house a lady's maid might go; he was determined none of them should stay long enough in his establishment to tell tales out of it.

This was a little wrong; but a few of such little wrongs insure a far greater and more bitter hatred than it is possible for a single outrage, however unjust and cruel, to produce. Grizelda shed tears of mortification over this small tyranny; and her proud heart resented the weakness it implied, — that she would make a friend and companion of her servant.

"I! who have not even told my sister how wretched you make me," she said to him, indignantly, one day.

"Then do so at once. Remember that I order you to tell your sister and your father."

He was quite sincere in his command. He hated both of them. And it was part of Grizelda's punishment to know in her heart that she was to blame in a great measure for this hatred. In the beginning of Maxwell's courtship she had found a sentimental pleasure in augmenting

the opposition to their love. She had repeated words not intended to be repeated; she had given to other words an animus more hateful than was their right. And now, when she would fain have had the comfort and support of her own kindred, she found that she had built a wall between her husband and them which no love nor patience could break down.

Things were in this wretched position when the London season closed. In every respect it had been unfavourable for Grizelda. Her health had failed continually. She was suffering physically as well as mentally. She began to have strong homesicknesses, to long for a breath of the wild Atlantic, to feel the breeze come down the Jura mountains with the scent of the gorse and the bog myrtle on it; to have haunting dreams of the balsam odours in the fir wood, and the green shadows where she had lain among the ferns and brackens. If Maxwell would only go back to Blairgowrie, she felt as if all suffering would be possible.

One evening, when their future movements were still undecided, Maxwell dined at home. She hoped something from his presence, hoped that he would tell her that they were going to

Scotland; anywhere would be better than London. Lauder Castle was in Fife; that was far enough from Jura to rid her of the influence of Miss Casselis; and, oh, if she could only take her life out of that shadow!

After the servants left the room she waited anxiously for some word of hope. She had indeed come to a point when any change would be welcome. But Maxwell moodily sipped his wine in silence. If he turned his eyes from the portion of the wall he appeared to be studying, it was only to glance with satisfaction at the ruby colour in a freshly filled glass.

When nearly an hour had thus passed Grizelda asked, —

“Have you any engagement this evening, Walter? If you have not, will you take me for a drive? I feel stronger than usual, I think.”

He did not answer her for a minute; then he turned to the window at which she sat, looked her steadily and silently in the face, and left the room.

No words could have so deeply and hopelessly wounded her. Hard words may be borne, but if a husband never raises his eyes when he hears his wife's voice, if he makes his cheek like

a stone when she kisses it, if he thinks her questions not worth answering, her wishes, not worth a refusal, if his step to her is like lead, and his step from her like light, what language can be so forcible and cruel?

Grizelda was not a weeping woman, yet her eyes filled, and her soul looked sadly through them, as a lovely landscape looks blurred and mournful through a heavy mist. She checked the weakness at once; it had been better perhaps if she had washed the wrong away in tears.

For the first time she deliberately indulged the thought of leaving him. Hitherto, if it had suggested itself, she had put it positively away. But hope was nearly dead. The question to be decided in her mind was whether to return to her father, or go to some place where she was quite unknown. There were little Highland hamlets where she could live a long life not uncomfortably on two thousand pounds. Her father and Helen would lament her, but it was better they should lament her as dead than trouble their hearts with her living misery. And Colin and Helen would marry, and fill the old castle with new life; and her father would

be comforted. She had given them nothing but trouble for two years; they would forgive and forget her faults when she could grieve them no more.

To these thoughts she wandered restlessly about. The butler came to close the dining-room, and she had not spirit enough to delay him; she trailed her heavy feet and long satin garment slowly up stairs, and after standing awhile at a window looking into the square, she turned to the drawing-room. It was a large room, or rather series of rooms, covering nearly the whole floor, and the thought of its space and dimness was a grateful one. The door opened noiselessly; the deep soft chairs made her suddenly feel how tired she was. She sat down in one of them, and lulled by the weariness of repressed emotion, by the gray twilight and the deep stillness, she fell asleep.

No one looked for her, or felt any uneasiness as to where she was. All the servants understood my lady's very small importance; her maid, a new one, quite familiar with the utmost privileges of her class, thought her duty fully done when she answered the calls made upon her. There was a little social meeting in the

housekeeper's room; at that hour Lord and Lady Maxwell were the most unimportant persons in their home.

It was long after midnight when Grizelda's soul came back to her. It had been at Ed-derloch, had wandered through all the pleasant places of the castle, kissed the laird and Helen as they lay sleeping, and then in a fisherman's boat on the Jura Sound been soothed with the cradling motion of the waves and the chant of the men at the fishing, —

“Briskly blows the evening gale,  
Fresh and free it blows ;  
Blessings on the fishing-boat —  
How merrily she goes !  
Christ He loved the fishermen  
Walking by the sea,  
How he blessed the fishing-boats,  
Down in Galilee !”

The familiar melody was in her ears and almost on her lips when she awoke; she was stronger, and her heart was calm and rested. She stood up and remembered all in an instant. But she had lit no light, and there was a dim one in the farthest room. She did not think of walking softly, or of avoiding the ottomans and stands which encumbered the floor. But she



did avoid them; and still as a spirit, she reached the point which commanded the lighted room.

Lord Maxwell was there. He sat at a table with his elbow on it, and his head in his hand, lost in thought. She watched his face as his angel might have watched it, looking anxiously for the good there, sorrowful over the evil. He was in evening dress, and looked exceedingly handsome. Her heart grew tender toward him. She was uncertain whether to go silently away or to speak.

As she hesitated, he touched a case lying on the table beneath his eyes. She had not noticed it before, but surely she knew it. Was it not the case of the likeness which had been taken of her during those happy weeks of her first season when she was a bride, beautiful and beloved? What was he going to do with it? She moved into the shadow; she was determined now to see his inmost thought of her.

She watched with her soul in her eyes, and her heart beating at her lips. "It is a righteous curiosity," she thought, "for if he looks kindly at that pretty remembrance of me, I will still hope; I will still remain by his side; I will bear everything. I will make no complaint

even to God. I will only ask Him to give me the power to win back the love I have lost."

While she was thus musing, Maxwell also had his own thoughts. For some minutes he sat with the case in his hand, unopened. Then he slowly pressed the spring, and Grizelda said, —

"My face is before him!"

She was so eager to read his feelings that she stood on tiptoe, slightly bending forward with outstretched hands. For a moment the tension was all she could bear. Then she saw him stoop to the pictured face and kiss it, — kiss it as he had kissed her in the sunlight and the moonlight when first they loved each other.

She was able to delay no longer. With a cry of delight, she sprang forward. Then Maxwell leaped to his feet, and the instantaneous change in his face froze her where she stood as completely as the summer streamlet is chained by the winter ice.

## CHAPTER XI.

### AGAINST HER LIFE.

If marriage is not an entire union, it is the most complete isolation.

The graves of the heart for which there is no resurrection.

My untouched honor ! I but wish in vain.

The fleece, once by the dyer stained,

Never again its whiteness gained.

MAXWELL sprang to Grizelda with an incredible passion. He grasped her hands with a strength that made her moan with pain. "How dare you watch me?" he cried; and his voice was thick and low with the fury in his heart.

"You hurt me, Walter! You make me sick — I shall faint!"

"I wish you would die! Why don't you?"

"I will go to my father."

"You will go with me to Paris; this day at noon we shall start. You have ten hours to prepare. *Go!*"

He flung her hands from him and turned away. She stopped him with a gesture so imperative that for a moment he was compelled to obey it.

"Tell me one thing. I will ask no other explanation. Why did you kiss my picture as you did a moment ago, and then turn on me myself like a — wild beast?"

The comparison came from her lips involuntarily, suggested by her soul in the moment's pause. He gnashed his teeth at it, and then burst into a low paroxysm of chuckling, mocking laughter. She stood watching him with terror and hatred. At length he turned the laughter into speech.

"Your picture! You thought I was kissing your picture!" He seized her wrist and dragged her to the table. "Your picture! Look at it, my lady!" And he forced it under her frightened face.

Oh, how lovely were the red, pouting lips! and the love-darting eyes! and the slim form, straight and stately as a young fir-tree! But it was the face and the form of Julia Casselis.

She closed her eyes and turned away her head.

“Look at it!”

“I will not. I cannot.”

“Then go to your room. And keep your eyes and your ears shut forever about my affairs.”

“Oh, Walter, can I never more hope to please you?”

“Can a burnt-out fire be rekindled?”

Then she lifted her head and looked with proud reproach at him. “I have no more love left for you. You are not worthy of it.”

She went away with the words. She was utterly miserable; for she had obtained the thing she had been determined to have, and she had found it false and worthless.

Misery travels free through all the earth. From Paris to Switzerland, up the Rhine and down the Rhine, wherever Grizelda journeyed, wherever she tarried, misery was her companion. She was in ill health; she was averse to movement, and suffered during it; but she was in the power of a tyrant who never considered the rights or feelings of any one when they crossed his own inclinations.

And her wan face and gradual emaciation were annoying to him; for he hated the sight

of sickness, and resented its claims upon his consideration.

But, as yet, he sinned with a kind of decorum. Before the servants of the household he affected the attention and sympathy due to his wife's position; yet, if left alone with Grizelda, he would permit a sentence to remain unfinished, or finish it with a sneer, rather than suffer her to imagine that there was any sincerity in his solicitude for her comfort.

If she had been one of those naturally vulgar women who are determined to have their say, whose tongues and tears would have blamed her husband, and defended herself before all and sundry who came in contact with their lives, she might, perhaps, have kept his determined and cunning cruelties somewhat in controul. For it is a fact that some wrongs are so mean, so unfair, so sinister and ignoble, that they cannot be met with any weapons but such as are as abject as themselves; and as Grizelda could not degrade her womanhood by scolding retaliations, by angry complainings, by contemptible little plans to secure a false sympathy from servants, — as she could not defend herself with ignoble weapons, she was at the mercy of the ignoble.

The attitude she had taken on that last night in her London home she maintained. She had no more tears or love left for her husband; he was unworthy of them; and she accepted the lot she had chosen for herself with a despairing calmness which put his every word and look on the same level. A kindness from him was now as repulsive as cruelty. She had passed the line where even self-deception was possible.

She knew quite well that their various movements during the summer, their forced journeys, their tiresome delays, had all been somehow or other for the purpose of crossing the Lauder party, and obtaining a shorter or longer meeting with Miss Casselis. She knew when these meetings took place; a score of small incidents advised her. For sin, blinded by passion, is foolish as an ostrich, and Maxwell invariably betrayed himself by the restlessness or the expectation of his manner; by his unusual care in dress; yes, even by a passing anxiety about his wife's condition.

He would say to his courier, —

“It is very inconvenient to wait here, but Lady Maxwell looks so ill I think it necessary to give her a few days' rest.”

Usually he deceived his attendants; they spoke together of his thoughtfulness and care. But he never deceived Grizelda, and very soon the courier was able to add circumstances together, and to predicate positively that whenever Lord Maxwell made one of these unexpected delays, the Earl of Lauder and his family were somewhere in the vicinity.

Often when a girl, Grizelda had sat with her eyes fixed on her atlas, dreaming of the days when these old storied cities should be a happy pleasure-ground for her. She could hardly keep back tears when she remembered her school-room, and the gay hours she had spent there planning with her companions — planning without destiny the good times they were to have in them.

Ah, she had reckoned up her happiness then without asking, "Who is to be my companion?" Here were the cities she had made little romances about, — the stately palaces, the ancient market-places, the grand cathedrals, the irresistible bazaars, — and her heart and her feet were too weary to tread them.

They rested finally in Rome. The Lauders had determined to winter there, and Maxwell



was in the same mind. The earl was an enthusiast on the subject of numismatics, and he anticipated completing in Rome his collection of medals. The countess and Miss Casselis had interests quite as absorbing. The one expected a kind of leadership among the English residents; the other expected not only many new lovers, but also the dangerous adoration of an old lover who had the charm of forbidden pleasure to her.

Grizelda understood the circumstances in which she was placed. She knew that she could not alter or controul them. She had no desire left to oppose them. Her last appeal had been made, unless, indeed, a child, — his own child, — might speak for her.

Maxwell rented an old palace, a forsaken home of decayed nobles, chill and comfortless in spite of its fine marbles and antique tapestries, and so large that they could occupy only a portion of one wing. But the strange old crumbling rooms were a great delight to Grizelda. They filled her not only with a soft melancholy, but also with a kind of resignation. What did it matter? At the last the noblest and the happiest lives come to an end. The

thing is to live worthy of the end. Among the fair-pictured faces on the walls she selected one who she was sure had seen, as she had, sorrow crumble her youth to pieces before her eyes. She sat down with it; she bade her soul talk with it; she asked it after its destiny; she grew so familiar with it that she could scarcely have feared if its angel had suddenly appeared to her. She never thought of anything incongruous in this shadowy friendship; for assuredly, whether we recognize the fact or not, there are souls to whom we are spiritually related.

And this mystical companionship comforted her wonderfully. She grew strong and almost happy. In a month she was so changed that Maxwell, meeting her one day upon the main stair, was struck with her beauty. If it had not been his own wife, he would have felt a strong admiration for her. As it was, he stood still as if to detain her. She coloured vividly, then turned pale as death, and passed onward. They had not spoken for a month; he had not seen her for nearly as long. So he had a few unpleasant moments, for conscience dies hard in the most wicked of men.

But whatever the better feeling was, it changed very rapidly to one of anger at her appearance. She looked happy! The thought was disagreeable to him. "I shall have her watched."

Wronging her every hour of the day, he was yet so flagrantly unjust as to stamp with indignation when his own wicked heart suggested that she might be wronging him. He did her the further injustice of measuring her integrity by that of women not to be named with her name.

"They are all alike!" he muttered. "Julia loves me, and does not mind wronging Grizelda. Grizelda evidently loves some one else, and does not mind wronging me. Fool that I was to trust her; did she not wrong her father before she married me?"

It is so easy for a wicked heart to think evil, so almost impossible for it to conceive good, that Maxwell's suspicions were as natural to him as breathing. "Besides," he argued, "what has renewed her beauty? Love, of course. Love for me? No, she hates me! What follows? I shall see. And she was going out also! Going out—what for? That, also, I shall find out!"

It was a new interest to him, and one which

he entered into with a wicked avidity. Disguise was easy to him; he assumed one so perfect that Grizelda might have spoken to him and yet left him undetected. Then he began to follow her. But the path in which her feet trod was so pure that it soon hurt him.

She led him first to an old church, where she sat for an hour motionless before a picture of the crucifixion. As the light faded, she went and stood by the lifted cross, as if to get closer to the Christ hanging there forsaken in the dark. He watched her until she re-entered the carriage she had come in. Then he followed her, not only straight to her own residence, but also to her own room.

It was necessary that he should find a cause for anger, and he found it in the supposition that she had been praying in a Roman Catholic church. And when conscience is used as a weapon for wounding, it is amazing how tender it becomes. Maxwell grew suddenly jealous for the Protestant religion. His people had always been on the side of John Knox, and he would not have his forefathers insulted by his wife praying before pictures in a popish place of worship. It was simple idolatry.

He made a special visit to her apartments the next day to tell her so. She lifted her eyes once to his face, and then let them fall on the figure she was painting. It happened to be a copy of a famous Madonna. The glance confused him. He thought he had some scathing words ready for her, and he forgot his arguments. He began to bluster, but the calm of the pictured face spoke to Grizelda's heart. The Mother of Sorrows had found the consolation of God. For her also it was surely sufficient. She hardly heeded the storm of words about her, until it closed with an order.

Then she answered, "It is incredible that a Scotchwoman, born in mother kirk, should pray to a picture. You know it! I have need of stronger help. I seek it constantly, even the help of the God of my fathers. You think it gives me pleasure to look at the paintings, so you refuse me the pleasure. I will not go to that church any more."

"You will not go to any Roman church for any purpose."

"There is the English church. I can go there."

"What are you painting? One of those

Virgin Marys? Just what I expected. I will have no such work in my house. It is a point of conscience with me."

"I will put it aside. I have other studies."

She took it into an inner room and did not return. In a minute or two, he felt as if he had been dismissed, and that was an indignity he could not submit to. With impetuous anger he followed. Grizelda was on a low bed. Her face was as white as its draperies. Her eyes were closed. She looked so like death, that the words on his lips were frozen. Without being conscious of the deference, he went away, softly closing the door as doors are closed upon death.

He only followed her once more. She went to the studio of Signor Donata, an aged painter honoured and beloved throughout Rome. He also entered the studio, looked at the pictures, and perceived that Grizelda was taking a lesson from Donata. She sat in a corner of the large room, shielded by her easel and by the drapery of an alcove. But Donata directed her at intervals; and Grizelda's face was so calm, so happy, and so interested that she seemed to have grown ten years younger.

He reflected much on this circumstance. Donata did not teach her for nothing. Where did she get the money? Was she in communication with her father? He felt that in this suspicion he had a real grievance. And Grizelda's heart failed her for a moment when Maxwell came to her for an explanation.

"I hear you are taking lessons from Donata. Does he teach you without money?"

"No. I pay him two guineas a lesson."

"Where do you get the money?"

"When I left home I had money which my father gave me."

"You have no right to money that I am not aware of. Pretty confidence that is! From your marriage day, then, you have deceived me. How much have you?"

She went to a drawer for her purse and laid it before him.

"That is all I have left out of fifty pounds. You can take it if you think it is yours."

He lifted the slight trifle of silk and beads and counted the change in it. Twenty-two pounds and six shillings. He threw the purse upon her toilet-table and put the money in his pocket.



“ I have paid Donata for ten lessons. I have taken three. Can I finish the lessons paid for? ”

“ Of course you will finish them. Painting is about the only thing you can do; and I am not going to let any Italian mountebank make fourteen pounds out of me.”

After this, without any distinct effort to do so, Grizelda was aware that she timed all her simple duties and pleasures so as best to avoid her husband. In the household the Italian servants were aware of some matrimonial coldness, but their ideas on the subject were much more indefinite than those of English men and women. In society it was understood that Lady Maxwell was not in a condition of health that warranted her taking any part in public festivities. And if people are bent upon retiring from the world, the world has not the time nor the disposition to urge them from their retirement. Lady Maxwell soon became a mere name, — a name less and less spoken as people got used to seeing her lord always alone, or else in attendance upon Miss Casselis.

Toward the end of October an event occurred which was destined to be a very impor-



tant one to Grizelda. One morning, early, there was an unusual outcry in the kitchen offices of the palace, and while Grizelda was wondering what might be the meaning of it, her maid, a Roman woman, came to seek her help.

Poor Caterina was ill, was dying. Had milady any medicine good for her?

Grizelda went to look at Caterina. She was a pretty young girl who had attended for some weeks to Grizelda's fine laces and lawns, and occasionally, when there was one of those sudden changes which Maxwell insisted upon, served also as a temporary lady's maid.

The girl was very ill. She lay on a stone bench in the great comfortless kitchen, drawing every breath in an agony. Among the fishers in Edderloch, Grizelda had seen similar cases. She knew at once that it was an acute inflammation of the lungs, brought on by some long fatigue and exposure, and that the illness was likely to be severe and tedious.

At the very moment her maid appealed to her, she had been feeling how aimless, how empty of all opportunities for good, was her life; and lo! here at her hand was a very work of love and mercy.

Without a moment's hesitation she ordered Caterina to be taken to a comfortable room. She sent for her own physician, and entered with all her heart into the duty of saving the girl's life. It was a hard battle; there were days when it seemed a hopeless battle.

But after many week's faithful and affectionate care, Caterina was again among her companions. Her gratitude was not only deep and sincere, it was demonstrative. She had not been schooled to put the pedal down on all feeling, and reduce emotion to one placid tone. Caterina's love and hate, her anger and her gratitude, were very real things, and she was continually looking for some way of expressing them.

Her lover shared all her thoughts. He was a handsome young Roman, loving a country life, but drawn to the city because the only place where it was possible for him to get money, — a want Peppo felt to be the supreme one of existence. Maxwell had noticed him frequently hanging about the palace, and there was something in the man's face which attracted him. Souls understand each other. Maxwell's soul said to him: If ever you need a tool for a deed

of darkness, you can buy that one; he has a price for any crime against a foreigner. For Peppo quieted his conscience with this broad distinction, — only against foreigners and heretics would he use his stiletto.

When Caterina recovered, she talked much to her lover of Grizelda and Grizelda's husband. Peppo had his own thoughts on the matter. Maxwell read them on the man's face. Long before they said a word together they understood each other. 'And whenever Maxwell went out of the house, and whenever he returned to it, Peppo was lounging somewhere near the portal. Sometimes he doffed his gay tasselled cap, sometimes he only sent the English lord a glance of intelligence. Yet no number of words could have made Maxwell better understand that Peppo knew the secret wish of his heart, and was ready to grant it — for money.

But nothing good or bad happens at once; there must be preparations. The flower is long budding, but in some secret hour, when no mortal sees, it becomes a rose. A man has a noble thought, he muses over it for years, then, in some diviner moment, he writes his name to

a piece of paper, the gold answers it, and the hospital or the college grows to its perfect intent.

So it is with evil. Judas had long pondered the possibility of betraying his master. But with the eating of that sop, the Devil took possession of him, and he went out and did the deed of hell.

Six months after his marriage, Maxwell had begun to regret it, — to wish he had never seen Grizelda. Dissatisfaction quickly grew to hate. Hate is the mother of murder; and before he saw Peppo, the desire to murder Grizelda was hot and living in his soul. It was only waiting its full hour. Both men were aware of that fact.

Near the end of November, Grizelda heard of her sister's death. Maxwell was out when the letter came, but she was determined to see him that night. And while waiting his return she helped her maid to pack a few necessary garments for a journey; for she felt that she must go to her father and comfort him. Unfortunately, in her sorrow she forgot her own appearance. Her eyes, red and swollen with weeping, her undressed hair, the loose white *négligé* which at that late hour she had assumed,

though all in absolute fitting with the time and circumstances, filled Maxwell with angry repulsion.

He had just left Julia Casselis. She had been clothed in lustrous silk and sparkling jewels. Amid the perfume and beauty of flowers, to the intoxicating strains of Chopin's waltzes, he had spoken softly to her of what might have been but for his unfortunate marriage; and she had looked the sympathy she still hesitated to express in words.

His heart was on fire with his unholy love, when Grizelda, white, and full of sorrow, came to him. Nothing is so annoying and irritating to a man as tears. If any woman has been taught differently, let her adjure the fallacy as soon as possible. If Grizelda had put on her richest robe and assumed the stately manner so becoming to her, she might have won the favour she asked; but her beauty was under a cloud, and her distracted air put him at once on the defensive. When she said, "Helen is dead! My sister is dead!" and then burst again into passionate weeping, he resented the intrusion of death and disagreeable thoughts into his own ecstatic dreams of Julia and love.

"I am sorry it is Helen," he said bitterly.  
"If it had only been you!"

"Oh, I wish it had! I wish it had!"

"For once we perfectly agree."

"Walter, let me go! Let me go to father!  
He is heart-broken."

"You would only make him worse; you are such a miserable, wretched creature. If a man was in the seventh heaven of delight, you would drag him down to where you lie grovelling all day. Go to your own apartments! I am weary of you!"

"Then let me go to father! For God's sake let me go!"

"Go to your own apartments!"

The sight of her tears, her anguish, her despair, was to Maxwell what the sop was to the great murderer. The Devil entered into him. He rang violently for Grizelda's maid, and putting on his hat, left the palace.

He had seen Peppo as he entered. When he passed again through the grim old portal, through which so much sin and sorrow had passed, the man was smoking in the moonlight. Maxwell spoke to him, and Peppo rose, flung his cigarette away, and stood attentive.

"What is your name?"

"Peppo, Milord."

"I have not seen you for two days."

"I have been about my business."

"Ah! what is your business?"

Peppo shrugged his shoulders expressively.

"Secret?"

"As the *grave*, Milord," emphasizing the word "grave."

"Why do you stay around my house so much?"

"I am waiting, perhaps Milord might want me; besides, there is a pretty girl whom —"

"Don't marry her. To marry is to put yourself in hell!"

Peppo shrugged his shoulders again.

"Perhaps; but there is a way out of that hell."

"If you can show me such a way, then I will —"

"Shall we talk inside, Milord? It is safer."

They went in together. They went into Maxwell's private room, and they talked the night away; that is, Maxwell talked. He was drinking brandy, and he soon felt its imbruting influence. He wanted Grizelda "put



where he would never see her or hear of her again."

"There is *one sure place*," answered Peppo, casting his eyes expressively downward.

Maxwell was too cowardly to say the fatal words. He wanted her "put away safely." Peppo more bluntly explained the phrase. Maxwell still ignored the explanation; but the brandy having told upon his excited state, he began to excuse himself, to cry a little over his cruel disappointment, to crave Peppo's sympathy for his unfortunate condition.

Peppo listened with scarcely repressed mockery. Maxwell's explanation about McNeil was perfectly unintelligible to him; as to Grizelda, he had formed, through Caterina, his own opinion of her. He bore the rambling story with a sort of patience, because he hoped to make the better terms for his patience. But as soon as money was named, Maxwell arrested himself, and stared with stupid incredulity at the man.

"*Five hundred pounds!* It is ridiculous!" he answered. "Fifty pounds are enough."

"Milord has his choice. I can go to others with my tale. By Bacchus! to save may be better than to kill."



The words in a measure sobered Maxwell. Already, then, he was in the power of the villain he had called to himself. He said sulkily, —

“Very well; I will give you five hundred pounds when it is done.”

“Six hundred, now, Milord. A gentleman’s word is not to be doubted for nothing. The money is also to be paid at the present; and I shall be at your order — when you call me.”

Peppo was master now. He had stood up and dictated his terms in a manner which Maxwell found it impossible to resist or resent. The money was paid.

“I will have a receipt, Peppo.”

“For what use? Would you dare to show it? When you want me, I shall be waiting. Have I not been waiting for six weeks?”

He put the money in a dirty bag, and went out with a bow which made Maxwell burn with anger. It was the greeting of a familiar, a comrade; and it made him understand, as nothing else could have done, how low he had fallen.

But he did not blame himself at all. It was Grizelda! Her! Curse her! Curse her! Oh! how he cursed her, and cursed the miserable letter of sympathy she had sent him about his

dogs, — “ *the beginning of all ! the beginning of all !* ” he exclaimed passionately. But he might have looked further back, and seen himself chuckling with wicked delight over the vice of his dogs, and privately turning them loose at night to work his malicious pleasure on his unoffending neighbours.

## CHAPTER XII.

### GRIZELDA IS LOST.

It becomes a man, if he have received aught grateful to his mind, to bear it in remembrance ; it is kindness that gives birth to kindness. SOPHOCLES.

For the sower of the seed is assuredly the author of the whole harvest of mischief.

Thou, who dost dwell alone ;  
Thou, who dost know thine own ;  
Thou, to whom all are known,  
From the cradle to the grave,  
Save ! oh, save !

ARNOLD.

IT was near Christmas when Maxwell spoke again to Peppo. Peppo had lounged as usual about the palace, but had avoided any intelligence with its master. Maxwell perceived, therefore, that he would be compelled to make the first decided step. The interval between the infamous bargain and its completion was a last season of grace to him ; but no influence was strong enough to combat the feeling of hate daily growing to murder in his heart. Even the

death of Helen, suggesting a double portion to Grizelda, was too weak. His love for Julia Casselis and his hate of his wife were more powerful motives than his love of money. Upon Christmas eve there was to be a grand *fête* at an English gentleman's residence, four miles from Rome. Lord and Lady Maxwell had invitations to it. This was the opportunity Maxwell had been looking for. Among the crush of vehicles going there, one more or less would never be particularly noticed

He called Peppo with a glance, and again took him to his room. There was no civility between the men. They already understood each other.

"You have heard of the *fête* at the Gigha villa?"

"I was thinking about it. The opportunity is good."

"How will you manage the affair?"

"Will milady be with you?"

"Yes."

"It is known that she wears jewels. Magnificent. I will stop your carriage. I will put her into my carriage. It will be supposed she has been taken for her jewels. Eh?"

Maxwell cast a black look at his confederate villain. He understood that Peppo expected the jewels as a perquisite, and that the negotiation would be closed if he opposed the plan. He therefore affected to acquiesce.

“The rest?”

“The next day I may be looked for, and I shall be smoking in my usual place.”

“And — she?”

“She will be safe. She will trouble you no more.”

“The jewels! — they are family jewels.”

“They will be safe also.”

“You dare not sell them in Rome.”

“*Per Baccho!* I know that. I shall sell them to Milord — in time.”

“You are to be relied on?”

“As the hour. Both it and I are certain.”

“That is all.”

“At present.”

There was in Peppo's expression and attitude a veiled insolence and defiance which might have warned Maxwell if the Devil had not both blinded and deafened him. Nay, but he was conscious of it; and in despite of the consciousness, persisted all the more fiercely in his deter-

mination. For in all deliberate sin there comes a moment when the man, instead of possessing the idea of crime, is possessed by it; and the Devil surely makes mad those whom he intends to destroy.

There were four days between the purpose and the fulfilment of the crime. It seems incredible that in them Maxwell never once contemplated the gain on the side of repentance; the peace of mind, the safety; the certainty that if he fled from temptation with his wife, she would forgive all her wrongs and love him freely again; the security of his Highland home; the ties there, which would blind and reconcile him to his self-denial; the money which would certainly be his if he fulfilled even now his promise to be a good husband to Grizelda.

None of these things could obtain from him a moment's attention. To be rid of Grizelda that he might marry Julia, — this one idea pushed everything else from his mind. He lived in the false exaltation of unbridled passion, in a world of unholy emotion, beyond the sympathy and comprehension of the world, which regarded right and wrong from the same point of justice.

The night preceding the *fête*, Grizelda was examining the dress prepared for it. Maxwell had, with rather more courtesy than usual, explained the necessity of her presence. The reasons given were political, and she did not at all understand them; but she did note, with a sickly flicker of hope and wonder, his kinder tone and manner. She plucked up heart, and determined to look her best.

Her wedding-dress, so rich and lovely and full of happy memories, lay in its scented case; a few alterations, a few flowers would give it a fresh air. She had occupied herself the whole day in directing the required changes. She tried it on with a flutter of pleasant satisfaction; it was still very becoming to her. As she stood in it, a servant entered.

“Caterina’s husband, Milady; he begs from your Goodness one five minutes.”

“Bring him here.

“Is Caterina sick, Peppo, that you come so late? ”

“True, Milady.” Then he glanced at Grizelda’s maid and stood speechless, twirling his gaudily striped cap.

“What do you wish, Peppo? ”

“If Milady would give me one five minutes — alone.”

“Tessa, you may go.”

Tessa, gladly enough, ran down the bare marble stairway to the cheerful, noisy kitchen. Peppo watched her out of sight; returning, he locked the door, and flinging himself at Grizelda's feet, he showed her the six hundred pounds.

“Milady! Milady! it is the price of your life. But if you will trust Peppo, he will save you as you saved my Caterina.”

She looked at him in horror, white to the lips, white as the robe she wore. But this was no moment for a faint heart. She put her hand on the kneeling man's shoulder, and said in a whisper, —

“Who gave you the money? Lord Maxwell?”

Peppo nodded. There were tears in his eyes, and an angry flush on his cheek.

“If Milady will only trust Caterina and Peppo.”

She put her hand in his.

“I will trust you. Listen! My lord gives you six hundred pounds to murder me; I will give you a thousand to save me.”



“For your goodness I will take you to Caterina until you can tell your own good friends.”

Then he explained to her the plot, and she agreed to make no opposition to it. She would permit him to carry her away. There was more hope in his mercy than in her husband's. She would trust entirely to him and Caterina. And Peppo kissed her satin-sandaled feet and vowed to lose his own life rather than touch hers.

The whole interview had lasted less than ten minutes. Peppo went to the kitchen with an order for soup and jelly for his poor Caterina; and Grizelda stood almost stupidly where he left her. It was hardly possible for her to conceive of a hatred so deadly and cruel. She had done nothing to deserve it. That fact, to her, appeared to make the other so incredible. She had not considered that it is the injurer, and not the injured, that hates; for it is sin that hardens the heart, and not loss or sorrow.

In a few minutes she lifted her eyes, and with an irresolute movement went to the door and fastened it. As she returned she saw herself in the mirror. She looked steadily at the sorrowful woman it reflected and then began, with hasty, trembling fingers, to remove the white

bravery of her bridal dress. "It was woven by disobedience and made by selfishness; a sorrowful dress it has been to me! Oh, Helen! Helen! Oh, my darling sister!" she sobbed. "The white garments are for you! For me there are none too black."

She was in a great confusion. She could form no plan. Her suffering was terrible; her terror equal to it. She had come to her soul's Gethsemane, and found no angel waiting there to strengthen her. Love is precious, and life may be given for love,—given even with joy and triumph; but to have love turn to hatred, and to surrender life to force and cruelty, that is indeed a bitter cup. Grizelda could not lift it. "Let it pass from me! Let it pass from me!" her soul cried out; for, ah! love's treacheries are a plough that breaks the human heart to pieces, unless in the midst of the hard experience it can reach that splendid vehemence of aspiration and submission, which, praying and enduring, still says, —

Yea, break my heart, but break it as a field  
Is by the plough upbroken for the corn;  
Oh, break it as the buds, by green leaf sealed,  
Are to unloose the golden blossom torn!  
Love would I offer unto Love's great Master;  
Set free the odour, break the alabaster!

But there was no sensible cry of any kind as yet in Grizelda's heart; all her energies were bent toward the concentration of her strength for the ordeal before her. She would not take into consideration whether Peppo was true to her or not. She had simply no hope but in him, and she could not throw that solitary hope away. For a few moments she thought of appealing to the British consul; but Lord Maxwell was on familiar terms with him. He would accuse her of sickness, perhaps of insanity, and her secluded life placed her at the mercy of any charge hatred and cunning chose to make. Besides, if she had thought of this possibility, had not Maxwell probably done the same, and prepared for it? If Peppo had been once bought, he could be bought again. The servants were all new ones; none of them had a special interest in her. Only Peppo and Caterina were bound to her by any kindly tie. She felt that she must trust entirely to them.

As the hour for leaving her home drew near, she dressed herself again in the fatal wedding-dress. Around her throat and arms were the sapphires and diamonds which had been her father's bridal gift. Maxwell cast an envious

look at them. Reset, how suitable they would be to Julia's beauty! He touched them lightly, and said, —

“ Grizelda, I would leave those gems at home. The roads outside the city are haunted by desperate robbers, especially on such an occasion as this. You look very lovely without them.”

She did look lovely, the words were true enough, for repressed excitement had given a luminous colouring to her skin and an intense brilliancy to her eyes; but the compliment at that moment was such a mockery that she could not avoid a look of inquiry which was very disconcerting. If shame or remorse had been possible to him, he would have felt its sting at that moment.

But she made no objection to his proposal.

“ I will remove them. Will they be safe in my jewel-case if both of us are absent?”

“ Give the key of your case to me. They will be safe enough until to-morrow.”

She went upstairs, secreted the precious stones about her person, and brought the key of her jewel-case to Maxwell; with some ostentation he put it in his pocket-book. Then the carriage was announced, and they left the room

together. Maxwell had that day dismissed his coachman and replaced him with a man sent by Peppo. He saw the fellow holding the reins, and was satisfied the scheme would be carried out.

He made one or two attempts to speak, but Grizelda could not continue them. Her whole soul was on the watch. Maxwell thought she was sulky about the jewels, and he rather prided himself upon his clever scheme for their preservation. And when Peppo came for their price, he would have him at an advantage; he would demand the jewels ere he paid the money. The more he thought of his little plan the better pleased he was with it.

As they approached the skirting of the wood where the attack was to be made, he became silent. He had purposely left the city half an hour later than the *fête* demanded; he was glad to see that the road was comparatively deserted. One belated carriage dashed past them at a rapid rate, but midway along the dangerous strip they were alone.

Two figures came suddenly from the wood. In a disguised voice they ordered the coachman to descend and hold the horses; and the man, in a paroxysm of pretended fear, obeyed.

Peppo and his confederate tied Lord Maxwell's hands and feet, performing the operation with such unnecessary cruelty that their victim was forced to relieve his agony with oaths and cries of sincere distress.

Grizelda was speechless. She had seen Peppo glance at her throat and arms, but she did not know that in the tightening of Maxwell's cords he was taking an advance payment of the revenge he intended. It had been Maxwell's own suggestion that he should be bound. It was a sufficient reason for his not giving the alarm until circumstances forced it from him, but he had no idea of the suffering that he was to endure in consequence of it.

The operation did not take three minutes; then Grizelda was carried into the wood, the horses were securely tied, Peppo and the coachman disappeared, and Maxwell was left bound on the roadside. Though in great agony, he noticed Grizelda's ominous silence, and supposed that she had fainted. Ten minutes later he had himself lost consciousness, though the cutting cold soon restored him to a conception of the possibilities of human nature in physical suffering.

Some of the poor hangers-on at such festivals, — stray musicians, servants out of place, etc., — passed the standing vehicle and the tied man; but they hurried away as if they had seen Death. Not one of them cared to risk the office of giving information. Suspensions, imprisonment, worse even might come from it.

“The poor are always guilty,” said one. “Let the man wait for his equals. It is not our fault if we dare not be charitable.”

So Maxwell actually lay in his miserable bonds until the first guests began to return to the city. Then his condition raised a tumult and an outcry of inquiries and indignation. He was taken back to Rome in Prince Camparas’s carriage, and all the paraphernalia of the police set as quickly as possible on the track of the robbers.

But some hours had been lost, and Maxwell did not help to put investigation on the right road; indeed, he was becoming every moment more terrified at the result of his wicked deed. This was natural, and supernatural also. The Devil does not mind how much care, how much terror and remorse, haunt the sinner when the deed is done. The betrayal accomplished, he

was quite willing that Judas should hang himself; he always is willing that suicide should follow murder.

But Maxwell had ample time for reflection. His wrists and ankles were frightfully cut and swollen, and the painful inflammation supervening was accompanied by a severe attack of acute rheumatic fever. His sufferings were terrible, but amid them all he had a constant fear still more terrible,—if he should become delirious and confess the truth! There was no relief for this fear but in the demand for Peppo's services as his attendant. The physician knew how Grizelda had nursed Peppo's wife back to life; he thought it a very natural thing that Peppo should repay the kindness.

Peppo was not a kind nurse. Peppo made him suffer a great deal that was beyond even the plenitude of suffering natural to rheumatic fever. He compelled him to confess the jewel trick, and he gave him in return such a lesson on the tenet of honour among thieves, as made Maxwell remember it with fear and trembling. Yes, it must be confessed that Peppo was neither kind-hearted nor truthful. He relieved the tedium of his attentions to his noble patient with



such details of Grizelda's death as he thought likely to make him miserable. While consoling himself with the assurance that Grizelda had forgiven him, nay, even thanked him for ridding her of a life made horrible by the tie which bound her to her husband, he gave Maxwell no comfort of any kind.

In certain moods he described Grizelda's angelic resignation, her prayers and blessings, until he wept at his own eloquence. In other moods he preferred that Maxwell should think she had suffered every outrage and brutality. Both stories were told with an equal air of truthfulness. Maxwell writhed between the two versions in an agony of suspense and uncertainty, made terrific by the phantasmal horrors of semi-delirium.

He was in this condition when Colin reached Rome. The news of Grizelda's fate, dreadful as it was, was scarcely a surprise to him. The vague anxiety which had suddenly taken possession of him at Edderloch had grown with every mile he had travelled, until it had become a fever of apprehension. When he heard the worst, he was quite prepared for it. Had he arrived two weeks earlier, he would certainly

have discovered the whole plot and reclaimed his cousin. But his untiring energy, his lavish use of money, his sleuth-hound hatred of Maxwell, were baffled by incompetence, superstitions, delays, false clues, lapse of time, a score of other obstacles which it was impossible for him to obviate.

He would not see Maxwell. He said boldly that it was not his interest to find his wife. In spite of the general sympathy for his loss and suffering, Colin had an unquenchable fire of hatred and suspicion in his heart against him. No one in Rome would listen to the faintest whisper, not even the police; but Colin was not influenced by this blindness of public judgment. He made every arrangement for the continuance of the search that love and hatred could devise.

Then he hastened back to Edderloch; for McNeil had been advised of his daughter's loss and probable death, and Colin thought with pity and dismay on the old man's grief; for the fondest love, if put between the living and the dead, turns, however reluctantly, to the living. There are hopes in the living, but the dead leave us none.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### MAXWELL MARRIES AGAIN.

They to the verge have followed what they love,  
And on the insuperable threshold stand.

Why perplex the soul with visions of to-morrow,  
When to-day its councils and its cares has brought ?

Walk boldly and wisely in the light thou hast ;  
There is a Hand above will help thee on.

AFTER Helen's death, Colin had found a small comfort in visiting her grave every day and leaving there a sprig of box or a cluster of rowan berries, or even a trailing spray of some of the pale, cold flowers of the sea. However simple the offering, it was a token of his remembrance. Those who have made such offerings will understand. The laird did not speak of these visits, but he was aware of them ; and when Colin went to Rome, he frequently carried the token in his place. And as the mystery that surrounds posthumous humanity is so great, surely it is the part of love to live

with regard to the dead as if they were observant of our memory of them.

One afternoon, about two weeks after Colin had left him, the laird went to the kirk-yard on this errand. He had been singularly miserable and restless all day; perhaps he hoped in this solitary communion to find comfort. But if comfort come not from within, Nature is usually hostile to grief; and this afternoon the solemn mountains, the misty moorlands, the melancholy waves, had no token of hope in them. In the mournful light which brooded above the fallen sun, his tall, massive figure, standing solitary on the cliff, was the very image of desolation. There was a cry in the sea, also, that the cry in his heart answered. He knew that there was trouble in the air.

Fortunately, Doctor Brodick was sitting with him when the news of Grizelda's death came. He took it with a terrible calmness. His face seemed to turn to granite. He was angry at the tears in Brodick's eyes.

"I will have no tears," he cried; "this is no time for them. I will have revenge!"

The terrible vacillation of his suspicions would give him no rest. At one moment he was

certain his child had been murdered; again, he was certain she was alive and calling to him for help. He thought of lonely convents, of the horrors of insane asylums and forgotten prison rooms, and felt as if impossibilities would be easy for her relief.

But, oh, how quickly love is made to feel the limitations of its physical conditions!

"Go to Rome!" said Brodick, pitifully. "Man, what will you do in Rome? Get yourself into trouble likewise. Colin will have left ere you get there. No one but priests and papists and singing men and women to ask a question of; and they won't understand you, nor you them. Think of this, McNeil; if Grizelda is above the ground, she has wit enough and strength enough to find her way back, either to her home or to her husband. If it is still to her husband, what is there for you to do or to say? If she comes to you, then the way for interference will be made plain."

"She has money, thank God! When I saw her last, I gave her money,—two thousand pounds. Money can work wonders."

"If she happened to have it with her. But

money in a desk or drawer — I am feared there would be little help in that.”

And McNeil spoke not. He was thinking of, he was really seeing, a slip of paper in the secret drawer of his own desk. It represented thousands of pounds, and it was doing no more good than if it were blank. But at this hour the thought angered him. The poor! What in his great sorrow were they to him? Could they give him help, or bring him word of his child? No. The trouble in his own house was sufficient for him to bear.

“My two dear girls,” he cried out, “both taken from me in three months! Oh, Brodick, it is more than any mortal can bear.”

“Laird, gird up yourself like a man. There are fathers outside your gates who have lost three children in three days. There is one father, Alexander Muir, who lost his whole household in a week, — wife and five bairns. He is handling his nets again. The others are about their daily work. The Lord gave, and the Lord took away.”

“Don’t finish, Brodick! When God gives a blessing, is it god-like to be taking it back again? If I was to take back the land I gave

to the village, what would you be saying of me?"

"You cannot foresee the future, Laird; God can. Man, whiles, turns gifts into losses, and blessings into curses. The gift may be best for us this year, on earth; next year it may be better for us to have it in heaven. Shall not the Judge of the whole earth do right?"

But McNeil was not to be reasoned with. He agreed, indeed, to wait for Colin's return, but the weeks intervening were weeks of great anxiety. As they passed, one by one, and no word came from Grizelda, Brodick was certain of her death. If alive, she would have contrived to send her father word; if a ransom had been asked, she would have appealed to him. And whenever this conclusion was reached, the men looked at each other with a dreadful intelligence: "If Grizelda were dead, Maxwell had compassed her death."

Colin did not return until March was nearly over. But fortunately for McNeil, he had been compelled ere that time to resume work on the hotel. The men at their dismissal in the fever time had been told to be ready on the first of March, and McNeil found them waiting his

orders. It was a relief to his perpetual thoughts of wrong and plans of vengeance. For such corroding sorrow, work is the oldest evangel preached.

Carrying care for others, he forgot himself. His wearied body compelled him to sleep, and sleep insensibly brought him something like patience. He gives His beloved in their sleep, gives them consolation by angelic influences and hopeful dreams; sends some messenger to put right what they have put wrong; to influence the hearts of those who have them in their power in any way. He reproves their enemies; He strengthens their friends. He gives them in their sleep the blessing they need; for perhaps when we are waking, we hinder the gift by the fearful complaining influences we call around us.

And McNeil, though chafing at Colin's failure, was compelled, at least for a while, to defer his own efforts. The detectives and other parties employed must have a reasonable time given them for investigations, as the future efforts of Grizelda's friends must depend upon what they accomplished or failed to accomplish.

For some weeks their reports were hopeful.



They were finding new clews; they were on the line of success; they had seen some one who had seen Grizelda in some distant village. Thus beguiled, McNeil and Colin saw the summer slip away. The hotel had been opened in June, and realized even more than the laird's hopes. Never had there been such prosperity in Edderloch. The fishermen had a market at their hands; their toil was well repaid; their wives made knitted goods and sold them; their children were gillies to the gentlemen on the hills, or maids to the ladies in the hotel. Ready money was plentiful with those who had thought a shilling a large sum; and contentment and an air of happy employment were on every face.

The laird felt his own anxious, fearful grief all the more bitterly. This was the very state of things he had dreamed about and planned and worked for; and though it had come, he was not able to enjoy the fruition of his hopes. His private griefs were in every success a dark and drifting shadow.

But when the hotel closed for the summer, he was determined to go himself to Rome. Then even Doctor Brodick thought it would be best to sanction this personal gratification.

The journey might divert his mind into new channels, and end a suspense which had lost all elements of hope, and become worse than the certainty of death.

But the journey was as fruitless of comfort as Colin's worst fears. They found Grizelda's disappearance nearly forgotten. Half a dozen later tragedies had pushed it outside the sympathies and memories of men. Besides, sympathy is for the living, forgetfulness for the dead. Whatever interest there was in an affair that was nearly a year old went naturally to Lord Maxwell. Such a polite, generous, handsome young lord! And how he had suffered! He had been carried to the seaside for the summer, and had just returned to Rome. A few people had seen him, so white, so weak, so broken down with suffering! And as for the lady, was she not very peculiar? Mrs. Pelham had a maid who had served Lady Maxwell for a month, and she was sure Lady Maxwell hated her husband. The next suggestion followed easily, — perhaps, indeed, she had another lover! This suspicion was natural and not unreasonable to the Italian mind. It seemed the most likely solution of the mystery. The

pretended robber was a lover; she had been willingly abducted, and if found, would probably refuse to return.

This view of the case was finally taken by the police. If there had been a robbery, it was impossible for the robbers to have escaped their extraordinary vigilance. If there had been a robbery, it was for the jewels, and these had never been offered for sale. Jewellers in all the great European cities had been advised of their loss, the setting described, and the size and colour of the stones.

The lady had her jewels yet, there was no doubt. She was in hiding somewhere with her lover.

And then Maxwell admitted with affected reluctance that he had been jealous of her frequent absences from her home. He said he had followed her to a certain church, and to the studio of Signor Donata.

Italian husbands and wives shook their heads at these admissions. To look at an altar picture! To take lessons from an aged painter! Was it conceivable that the wife of an English noble, a young and pretty woman, could have only such motives for conduct so unusual?

All these suspicions came bluntly enough from the emissaries employed by Colin. They saw their occupation was at an end. They felt a kind of anger at the lady who had not answered their trifling efforts. To save their own reputation at the cost of hers was a satisfaction. The McNeil heard them with doubt and anger. He was resolved to see Maxwell, and he called upon him without warning or ceremony.

But Maxwell had heard of his presence in Rome. He was prepared for the visit. He met his father-in-law with a burst of tears and a clever imitation of extreme physical weakness and suffering. He deplored, he protested, he was on the point of fainting twice; he acknowledged that he had sometimes pained Grizelda, and entreated Grizelda's father to forgive him for her.

He did not convince McNeil, but he disarmed him for the time, and even compelled, at parting, a kind of conventional courtesy; and thus from the injured father there was unwittingly forced the only thing necessary for Maxwell's triumphant social acquittal. He could now talk of the McNeil's kind visit to him, of McNeil's sympathy for his sufferings. He could sigh, and

intimate so much by his sighs and by his very silences, that every one was sure that he had been a grievously wronged husband, and that Grizelda's father knew it.

But never for one moment did so shameful a suspicion find a home in the laird's heart. And Colin did not resent it with more impetuous anger than did Doctor Brodick. Wilful and selfish Grizelda might have been, but wicked and unwomanly — never ! No one of the three men would tolerate the thought.

“ A year of change, and five years of rest to follow.” The old proverb found in McNeil Castle a kind of verification. As time went on, Grizelda's name was less and less spoken; but none that had loved forgot her. There were still days in which her father could not put down the conviction that she was alive, and that he should not die until he had seen her face again; for the soul believes as the body breathes. It has no need to discuss its faith, or to examine its proofs; it has the evidence of things not seen.

He and Colin lived a very calm and methodical life. The success of the hotel had, as foreseen, necessitated more building. A pretty

town was growing around it. The ancient fishing village was all astir with the changes constantly going on; the sheep farms were enlarged, the game strictly preserved. The two men were growing rich in money, and still richer in houses and lands.

In the spring there were always alterations and additions to be made, planting to be done, fishing-boats and nets to be looked over, the hotel to be put in order, etc. In summer and autumn the old silence of the hills and moors was broken by troops of visitors, by wandering artists, by sportsmen and pilgrims of all kinds. In winter the laird and Colin went to Edinburgh, and enjoyed a mild kind of social dissipation among their friends and relatives, and in pursuit of their particular hobbies.

Toward the close of the fifth year they began to talk together in a calm, fitful way of Colin's marriage. An heir to the great property they were amassing was an important thing. And the laird had noticed with satisfaction that Colin had been more attentive than was his custom to pretty Rosa McNeil, the daughter of one of his own cousins. He permitted him to understand his satisfaction, but nothing definite was

said on the subject. Indeed, it was not one which interested Colin much. He was a loyal lad, and the loss of Helen and Grizelda had given his heart a shock. The two fair girls who had been so sweet a part of his life and love — how could he forget them? As a matter of duty, he felt that he must marry soon; but the bridegrooms of duty are not impatient ones.

Early in the spring of the sixth year the two men returned from Edinburgh to Edderloch, after a very pleasant winter. They were talking over the usual routine of spring business as they were approaching their journey's end. The gray turrets of the castle were in view; a smile of content was on each face. Suddenly a carriage, drawn by two high-mettled horses, passed them with an impetuosity that compelled McNeil's driver to make way for it. In the haste the laird's older-fashioned and more cumbrous vehicle was nearly over-thrown.

But, quick as the passing was, both McNeil and Colin saw the handsome, insolent face of Maxwell bending slightly forward as if the *contretemps* highly amused him. McNeil was furious. In the first outburst of his rage he dismissed the trembling old coachman, who



could offer no apology but the very pertinent one, that he was feared of an accident and of some danger to the McNeil.

“So you made the McNeil give the middle of the road to the like of him! My own road, too! David, I’ll never forgive you the insult!”

But when Brodick came to the castle, they heard news which put all other things out of their minds. Maxwell was married again. He had just brought his wife and child to Blairgowrie. He must, then, have some certain knowledge of Grizelda’s death, and how cruel it was in him to have withheld it!

The laird was for Blairgowrie at once. Colin was on his feet to accompany him. But Brodick opposed the hasty movement.

“Hurry is the Devil’s servant,” he cried; “sit down, both of you. Ere you win Blairgowrie to-night, it will be ten o’clock. I’m not going with two passionate men this night, and you are na to go without me; you’ll be better to have a witness to all that is said and done. And you’ll get your thoughts together, and your tempers together, and be more able to speak like men with gentle blood in them, when



you have put twelve hours between Maxwell and your first passion."

In the morning it was decided that only the laird and his friend Brodick should call on Maxwell. Colin had not the right of question; he was very hot-tempered; he was particularly hateful to Maxwell. If he voluntarily entered his house, he put it in Maxwell's power to offer him insults that would be intolerable, and perhaps demand such an instant satisfaction as might put Colin in the power of the law.

Maxwell's treatment of McNeil was very different from what it had been in Rome. He kept the laird and the minister waiting until he had finished his breakfast, and he took care to prolong the meal to his utmost desire. As the two angry men sat waiting, they could hear his shrill, mocking voice and laughter keeping a kind of accompaniment to a woman's variable tones.

When he came to them finally, he was leisurely picking his teeth. His air was that of insolent happiness and satisfied physical wants, demanding of some intruder, "What the Devil do you come here for?" McNeil and Brodick looked almost god-like as they stood up with sternly solemn faces to meet him.

"I want to hear about my child, Lord Maxwell. I presume you have some certain knowledge of her death."

"I must say, sir, that I think it very impertinent in you to bring such an offensive memory into my happy home. Of course she is dead. If you had paid as much attention to her fate as to your hotel, you would not have had any occasion to trouble me."

"I care nothing for your insults, Lord. Tell me plainly of my daughter."

"Anatalja, a famous robber, suffered for his crimes two years ago. In his last confession, among a hundred other atrocities, he described the carrying off of Lady Maxwell. The jewels you gave her were the temptation. A thrust or two from a stiletto made them Anatalja's property. He was so good as to inform the police where the remains might be found. If you care about the information, your nephew is well acquainted with the Roman detectives; they will doubtless oblige him with the necessary instructions."

"Wretch! Double-dyed wretch! To leave your wife without Christian burial! Give me now the directions!"

“ I really did not trouble myself with them.”

“ *McNeil! McNeil!* ” and Brodick strode between the outraged father and his tormentor. Then turning to Maxwell he cried out, “ Lord Maxwell, you are a hound, and you shall die like a hound, and none that love you shall be near you ! — Come, Laird ! Come, my ain dear friend ! You have suffered a great wrong, but this very wrong is the beginning of the righting. I am speaking beyond myself now, McNeil, but I know I am speaking the truth ! — and God is aboon the De’il.” And so, with short, emphatic sentences, he strengthened the distracted father until he had led him beyond the sight of Blairgowrie.

Then he encouraged him to weep and lament. Then he joined in his anger and indorsed his suspicions, and thus together they returned to the castle. Nothing of all that had been said was kept from Colin, and within an hour the young man was on the road to Rome. At least a burial among her kindred could be given to the unfortunate child of McNeil. Colin’s dark face was on fire with anger and hatred.

“ I will find him out, dear uncle, if I go to the gates of hell for the information ! ”

“Go to the gates of heaven, my lad; commit your way to God and His angels, and they will direct your steps.”

They were the minister's last words as he held Colin's hand in adieu. A tight grip answered them, but he looked beyond the minister to where the outraged and bereaved father stood trembling with rage and sorrow; and the look was one the two men understood, — a life for a life.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### COLIN AND GRIZELDA.

The heart is its own fate.

There are points from which we can command our life : when the soul sweeps the future like a glass, and coming things, full-freighted with our fate, jut out dark on the offing of the mind.

Her soul dilated at the sound of doors  
That opened to the future.

UPON the whole, the interview had been a pleasant one to Lord Maxwell. He rehearsed it, with sundry additions, to his wife as they sat in the spring sunshine laughing over it. For the statements made to McNeil were substantially true, and had been so accepted by every one in Rome ; but beyond this confession of Anatalja's there was a circumstance known only to Maxwell. The confession was in fact dictated by Maxwell. He had found that Julia's family had positively objected to a marriage between them until there was a certainty of Grizelda's death ; and though he had

no doubt of it himself, he could not bring Peppo to confirm his convictions.

One day he heard casually of the capture of Anatalja and his condemnation. "Now that hope is over he will make a confession," said a Roman gentleman present; "they all do." These words set everything clear to Lord Maxwell. He easily procured an interview with the criminal. He found that it was still easier to induce him to add Grizelda's abduction and murder to the list of crimes in his confession. The man had the miserable vanity of his class, — he desired his list to be a long one, the longest of his time; and besides, he was to get fifty pounds for his complaisance. Fifty pounds would buy a gold necklace for his mistress, and say some masses for his own soul. He looked on Maxwell's offer as a special favour of his patron saint.

This printed confession embodied the statement Maxwell made to McNeil. It was considered by every one satisfactory as to the fate of Lady Maxwell; and after it the preparations for Lord Maxwell's second marriage, with Miss Casselis, went forward with the approbation of all concerned.

But plausible as the explanation of the mystery seemed, it was a lie from the beginning. Grizelda was living. Grizelda was in Rome; and she read with a mournful smile the assurance of her murder. It cut her still further off from the dead past, and she was glad to think that so long a time had gone by ere her father and Colin would have the certainty of her death. The sting of it was over. Who would weep again for what they must believe was now a handful of dust?

Yet as she sat with the rudely printed confession in her hand she was a woman of splendid beauty. Between her and the cold, sorrowful wife whom Peppo had taken without a shadow of resistance from her husband's care, there was the difference of the pallid dawn and the glorious noonday.

She did not faint that night in Peppo's arms as Maxwell supposed. On the contrary, she gathered strength with every step he carried her; and within a hundred yards from the road she was met by Caterina, who took her into charge with pitying words and tears.

Grizelda wrapped her fur mantle around her, for there was no time for a change of costume,

and the two women silently and swiftly rode southward until after the day had broken. Then, in a lonely wood, Grizelda threw off the white robe stained with such sad memories; it was dropped into a hollow tree, and Caterina dressed her in a peasant's costume. She would have given her money and jewels to Caterina, but the woman would not touch them.

"Your life for my life," she answered; "all else is too little payment."

It was the evening of the second day when they stopped at the door of a cottage. They were in a secluded valley, and the cottage was surrounded by a vineyard.

"It is your own, my lady," said Caterina. "Peppo was born here. He knows every one within fifty miles. You are as safe as if you were in England."

The assurance was very welcome. Grizelda was greatly fatigued; the fear of being retaken had alone kept her in the saddle during the last twelve hours. She ate and slept, and for three days heeded not her troubles. In sleep she sank below their tide; awake, she was yet too mentally exhausted to consider her situation.



But in this interregnum of reason she really seemed to develop some new mental quality. Clearness of vision, intensity of will were the dominant qualities of the Grizelda who awoke to her new life. She was alone with Caterina. All was infinite peace and beauty around her. She had a sense of freedom and sympathy; that, for a short time, sufficed for happiness.

Consideration came with the ability to consider. "What must I do?" She asked herself this question perpetually. The first answer was naturally, "Go home to my father." But no sooner was the answer given than her whole nature denied and opposed it. To be robbed and murdered was a calamity, but it was not a crime; but if she went back to her father, he would be compelled to defend her good name by prosecuting Lord Maxwell, or she must keep silence regarding her great wrong, and suffer the blame and scorn usually given to slighted wives.

She imagined the shame and trouble she would bring upon all the family of the McNeils; their inquiries, their advices, possibly their reproaches. She was only a woman out of favour with fortune; who would believe her

story? And she never doubted, also, that Maxwell's cunning and wealth would find plenty of contrary evidence. They might even doubt her honour and purity. But they could not slander a spirit. Always she came to the same conclusion: "I cannot go home to trouble all who love me. It is better they mourn me as dead than that they should come to regard me as a trial and a shame."

There was also a very important event to be considered in all Grizelda's plans. When the spring came, she would, if God had so much mercy upon her, have a child. Here she could rest in peace with Caterina until its birth. If Helen had been alive, she would certainly have gone to her; but she dreaded the lonely castle, into which of necessity she must take with her an instant discussion of her wrongs.

"Till my baby comes; till I am strong to feel and to labour, I will be quiet. I will trust to Caterina." This resolution was the only one she found herself able to accept. It precisely fitted her physical and mental temper. She had the consciousness within herself that she was doing right.

The time passed like a peaceful dream. She

let the new hope fill her life. Caterina went into the nearest towns and bought her all she needed, and she sat sewing prayers and hopes into the little garments she was preparing. She put the past, with all its loves and sorrows, resolutely behind her.

The child was born at the close of April. It was a fine boy, with all the physical traits of the McNeils; a rosy, healthy, laughing baby, that never by any trick of feature or contradiction of temper reminded her of its father. A wonderful baby it was to the two women; and somehow the time slipped on until the hot season was upon them, and it was unsafe to move into the city.

For back to Rome Grizelda had determined to go. That was the one place that no mortal would seek her in. And she had her own plan for living there. "Indeed," she said to Caterina, "it is the brave who are not discovered. If I remain here, some passing traveller will stop and recognize me."

It was the beginning of winter when she entered Rome again. The shadows of the night were darkening the streets; every one was weary with the day, and hastening to his home.

Grizelda was slightly veiled, and her figure somewhat disguised in a loose cloak. Caterina carried the babe and walked by her side. People jostled them on the Corso, but no one was attracted by their appearance.

Grizelda led the way to the lofty old palace in which Signor Donata resided. She knew that his living-rooms were above his studio, and she went directly to them. The porter at the door gave her some anxiety; but fortunately he had been changed, and the new one looked carelessly at her.

She knocked sharply at the door of the Signor's apartments, and Signora Donata herself answered the summons. She thought it had been her husband's signal, and was amazed to see the two women and the babe. But it only needed a whispered sentence from Grizelda to make the white-haired old lady exclaim pitifully, —

“Holy Mother! Come in, my poor little one! And is this thy dear babe? And thy friend?”

That night Grizelda opened her heart to the Donatas. They thought it their duty, first, to urge on her a return to her people; but finding

Grizelda immovable on that subject, they entered with all their kindly hearts into her plans for her future. These were simple enough with the Donatas' help.

Above their own floor there was another, a great bare garret with a flat roof, whose height overtopped all the surrounding buildings. Grizelda resolved to furnish this with some degree of luxury, and there, with Caterina and Peppo, make her home. The roof would give her air and exercise. Caterina would attend to her wants and her baby; Peppo would prevent impertinent curiosity; and with the signor's help, Grizelda purposed to pursue art, so that when her money was gone she would have a trustworthy resource.

In time this arrangement was carried out very perfectly. Unknown to all the world below her, Grizelda made there a beautiful home. Her child and her painting absorbed her; and within three years, her pretty pictures had a reputation, and a very satisfactory value. In the main, she was at least content. Life was too strong and vivid within her for happiness under such curtailments; but contentment is a measure sufficient for the majority of our days.

The little household went on with a placid monotony. Caterina served an early breakfast, and then dressed the child and took him with her to make such purchases as were needed; between her kitchen and his mother's studio, he passed the rest of the day, or he went upon the roof with his picture-book and dreamed far finer stories than any he read. It was fortunate for him that he constantly grew more into the resemblance of his mother's family. If he had been like his father! Grizelda often shivered at the thought; and when it came, she answered it with a prayer of gratitude that from such a strait of her mother-love she had been spared.

All day Grizelda painted. Her ability was not of the highest order, but she worked with that patience which is almost genius. Her touch was so light, and her colouring so delicate, that her pictures attracted that very large class who are always more satisfied with painstaking work than with the crude efforts of the most original genius.

Still, there were days which even Roman sunshine and fortunate work could not brighten; days in which her life seemed altogether wrong and out of joint. Little domestic troubles not

to be avoided in any home found her out. Caterina was not always up to her highest level. Peppo wounded her, or kept her in anxiety, and then Caterina felt that Grizelda's limitations also limited her.

Peppo was, indeed, the black sheep of the small home. He was always treading upon that dangerously narrow line dividing imprudence from crime. For Peppo liked money, and yet hated any prosaic way of getting money. He would gamble or steal, he would run any risk short of life and death for it; and therefore if he were longer away than usual, Caterina was a restless and unhappy woman to live with.

When these small trials came, they always set Grizelda thinking. She had then hours of eager dissatisfaction which made her throw down her brushes and walk rapidly the long stretch of her softly carpeted room. Never had she been so beautiful; and she knew the fact. A longing for the active joys and sorrows of life came over her like a passion.

To her soul she complained: "This colourless, tranquil existence whose very name is 'forgetfulness' gives me only the constant anguish of patience." And though her soul



whispered back that she had far more than she had asked for when she cast herself alone upon God's care, that she was secure and peaceful in the present life, and had the hopes of the future in reserve, she almost angrily denied the consolation.

"I may, indeed, be comforted of God when I am dead, but now — now? I am hungry for the joys He has forbidden me."

Your own fault, alas! — your own fault, Grizelda.

These dissatisfactions naturally grew with time; they became stronger and more frequent. For if Grizelda were dreaming of a wider life, Caterina also had longings for a cottage of her own, where she would be absolute mistress of her time and work, and into which the neighbours would come and go with the village gossip.

Never had these human cravings been so decided in each heart as during that very springtime when Lord Maxwell brought his second bride to Blairgowrie. While Colin was hastening to Rome to secure, if still possible, the remains of his cousin, and carry them back to share the resting-place of her sister, Grizelda



was herself unable to sleep by night or work by day for the passionate longing to see her home which possessed her.

One plan after another was formed and abandoned. She blamed herself for evading at the first the struggle which she must now enter with all the disadvantages which lapse of time entails on the complainant in any case.

When she had been mourned and forgotten, it would be twice as hard for her friends to espouse her cause. Perhaps they might even feel the righting of Lady Maxwell to be a great wrong to the McNeils. Colin had possibly made other ties. There might be children in McNeil Castle, and her child might not be welcome among them. If she returned home, and said, "I am here," would her friends be delighted or embarrassed? Would there be any place for her?

Such thoughts occupied her one morning so exclusively that she was obliged to give her mind up to them. There was an air of irritability in the home that fitted them. Little Archibald felt the influence. He did not venture from his mother's room, but lay curled up on a sofa. His childish face, with its wistful,

pathetic look, wounded her like a sword. She could bear the shadow on her own life; but when it darkened the boy's, she felt that she must carry him into the sunshine.

There was a knock at the door. She knew that it was Signor Donata's knock, and she was annoyed at the intrusion, — just then the sale of pictures did not interest her. But as soon as he entered she saw that his face had not its usual expression. She sent the child to the roof, and asked, —

“Is there anything strange, Signor?”

“I will tell you, Milady. This morning that beautiful Miss Ferrars was to come to my studio at eleven o'clock. She had promised me a sitting for her likeness. But it is at ten she comes, and says, ‘Pray, Signor, excuse me to-day. There is to be a great service at the English church over the remains of that poor Lady Maxwell who was murdered nearly six years ago, and every one will be there.’”

“What said you to her?”

“I said, ‘It is late for Lord Maxwell to perform the rite which he ought to have observed immediately after Anatalja's confession;’ and she answered, ‘Oh, indeed, the wretch has nothing

to do with the service. It is the lady's cousin from Scotland, the handsomest of men, I assure you. We saw him yesterday walking bare-headed before the coffin, as it was carried into the church.' Milady, pardon me, but indeed this seclusion of yours goes too far."

"Signor, the same thought is in my own heart. Will you take a letter to my cousin Colin for me?"

"I will go as soon as you have written it."

She sat down at her desk, and on a sheet of paper drew rapidly in one corner a view of McNeil Castle. Below it she wrote in her own free, flowing hand, —

The bearer of this will bring Mr. Colin McNeil to one who will give him all information regarding his cousin Grizelda.

Colin opened the letter with a haughty indifference; but his dark, ruddy face was an interesting study to the artist, and he watched keenly for the transformation he expected. It came instantaneously. Wonder, amazement, hope, impatience passed like thoughts across it.

"Sir," he said, "I was less than civil to you. I have had so many useless and curious intru-

sions. Pardon me. This moment I am at your service."

Donata frankly took the hand offered, and the two men, without delay, went out together. Ten minutes' walk brought them to Donata's residence. At his own door he stopped and said, —

"Such help as I could give is now ended. You will find the writer of the letter on the next floor."

Perhaps Donata was a little offended at Colin's reticence and undemonstrative manner. But he quickly began to make excuses.

"The man is proud as Lucifer; he would die rather than show he had a feeling. I dare say he will walk up to his cousin as if he had seen her yesterday, and say, 'Good morning, Grizelda; I hope you are quite well.'"

Colin's knock was expected by Grizelda; her ears had ached for it. She stood up, flushed and trembling, to meet the fate she had called to her. Caterina opened the door. No gentleman but Donata had ever called there, and a sudden presentiment, a recognition, almost spoke for her. She pointed to Grizelda's apartment.

“My mistress is present.”

He made no answer and no delay. In a moment he stood in Grizelda's presence. She gave a sharp cry; he opened his arms, and instantaneously he held her safely within them. The long tension snapped with tears, — Grizelda felt them dropping upon her face as he kissed her, — and tears with Colin meant the very extremity of emotion. Only for Helen's death and Grizelda's recovery had he ever shed them.

His coming into the house changed everything in it. Caterina felt the influence immediately. She knew that the end was near, and she met it with congratulations and smiles. She gave the household an air of festival. She sympathized with all her heart in the joy of the woman who had been lost and was found again.

Not until this day had Grizelda heard of Lord Maxwell's second marriage. Whatever was undecided in her plans, it decided; no one should wrong her child. To delay her own vindication was now to cloud his birth and imperil his inheritance. Colin's clear mind took in at once all that was to be done, and Grizelda put herself entirely in his hands.

Secrecy was still the first necessity, and therefore it was thought best to allow the funeral rites to proceed.

"Though we know not whom we honour, blessed is the man who is merciful to the dead," said Colin, quoting the pious proverb of his race. But he could not help recalling the poor handful of shrouded dust, and comparing it with Grizelda sitting at his side, instinct with life and crowned with beauty.

The Donatas and Caterina were speedily taken into the plan for retribution. They were indeed an important part of it. On their testimony all depended, if Maxwell was disposed to make any effort to fight the Nemesis unrelentingly advancing.

Peppo was the one uncertain factor. Colin feared that his support would be given to the highest bidder; but while this fear was on his tongue, Peppo unexpectedly came home. His dark, handsome face gleamed with a wicked intelligence as soon as he saw the direction in which events were tending. His hatred of Maxwell flamed up with all the intensity of a subdued force.

Would he go to Scotland to confound him?

He would go to the end of the earth for such a delightful object. How soon could he go? If Milord McNeil could settle the terms, he could be ready in an hour.

He pointed out with considerable pride that he had been faithful to Grizelda for six years, he and Caterina; that her famous jewels had been at his fingers' ends during the whole time, and his honour had been invincible to the temptation.

And Colin, though a prudent man in money matters, forgot prudence in this case. He made Peppo and Caterina such a stupendously generous offer that they were almost beside themselves with joy. The farm and vineyard, the fine stone houses with porticos, which had been Peppo's most extravagant dream, were a certainty; for the money was to be deposited for him in a Roman bank ere he left for Scotland, and three months after date he could draw it.

"How excellent a thing it is to be kind to the unfortunate," he said to Caterina, as they discussed their prospects by the kitchen hearth. "If I had not had a great soul, Caterina, reflect how much we should have lost! But I had pity



upon milady; I was the soul of honour about those jewels; consequently, I could make a good bargain. And when I think of that sneering wolf in man's clothing I am happy, Caterina. I am going to have a little pleasure. The brute tried to steal the jewels, — ah, I have not forgiven him.”

Caterina heard all this self-applause with that sublime patience and restraint good wives learn. She never reminded him of her own entreaties on Grizelda's behalf, never alluded to the fact that she had often felt compelled to put the jewels where they could *not* be at his fingers' ends; she permitted him to claim with complaisance all the good qualities he had no right to, — unless, indeed, a husband may rightfully claim a wife's virtues as well as her services.

In three days they were on the road to Scotland. Colin had Grizelda and her child in his loving care; Peppo, in all the splendour of a new travelling-suit, protected Caterina. The Donatas were to follow if their testimony was required, but Colin had come to regard Peppo's opinion of Maxwell as a definitely true one.

“He will go to the feet, Milord McNeil, — he will go to the feet, and you will kick him away.”



## CHAPTER XV.

### THE GIFT OF GLADNESS.

Are thy dearest still  
With thee on earth? do their sweet voices fill  
The house with singing? Let the fairest room  
Be for the Master's use, and from His shrine  
Blessing and peace shall rest on thee and thine.

COLIN'S departure for Rome left the laird lonely indeed. Brodick's work was now all that his hands and heart could manage, and it was so methodically arranged that almost every hour had its own claim. Generally, however, at evening, he might be seen going toward the castle to talk awhile with his life-long friend. But McNeil had come to a point at which anger and grief had passed silence. If Colin brought back any remains of his poor Grizelda, he was determined to call all the neighbourhood together to her burial, and tell the gathered lairds at her grave-side the story of her wretched married life and her tragic death. He had other plans of vengeance, all alike foolish, and

out of touch with the changed feelings which his own improvements had mainly induced; for he forgot that in bringing the vivid life of the nineteenth century into the quiet hills, he had brought with it the selfish, time-serving, politic spirit which is part and parcel of it.

He said to himself: "When my grandfather fell out with Black McAllister, every laird, far and near, stood shoulder to shoulder with McNeil. They would have drawn their dirks in his quarrel as if it was their own; and they made McAllister's life that miserable that he was glad enough to get out of their ken. His wrongs were only money wrongs, but mine! Every father's heart must beat with mine!"

McNeil was a few years too late to make such a prediction. Even ten years previously he might have justifiably trusted in it, and found his trust not in vain; but he had himself called unto him a new era. Men insensibly change with the circumstances around them; the stir or stillness of the atmosphere they breathe even has its effect. Some of the neighbouring gentry felt, in a large measure, all the jealousy Maxwell had expressed. They wondered they had not thought of the laird's plans; they came in

time to wonder if they had not been really the first to think of them, and to regard McNeil as a man who had taken advantage, because he had aye the ready money laying for any scheme. Greenlees "remembered speaking of a lobster fishery;" Tallisker had often thought of an hotel, and he had no doubt he had spoken the thought "when the whiskey was aboon the wit."

Other families had been seriously offended by Colin's indifference to their pretty daughters. "No one but a McNeil is good enough for the proud lad," was said with a jocularly which had much real bitterness in it. A large number, in any open quarrel between Maxwell and McNeil, would side with Maxwell from the simple consideration that McNeil lived a selfishly lonely life in his old castle, intent only on amassing money and advancing his many new schemes; while Lord Maxwell had just brought home a stylish young bride, who had already given promises of balls and hunts and gayeties of all kinds. What did this large class care that McNeil's lobster fleet had given bread to many otherwise starving people? Maxwell had brought with him a lovely yacht, and pleasure sails to Iona and Oban were looked forward to.

Though McNeil never took these facts into consideration, Brodick did. He foresaw that any public appeal for sympathy would be coldly and silently received. He begged the laird to abandon an idea which had outlived the age in which it would have raised a passionate partisanship. So perhaps these weeks of Colin's last absence were the hardest that McNeil had ever known. Maxwell troubled him wherever he turned. If he went to the hotel, Maxwell's fine carriage was standing before the door; and Maxwell was lounging about the bar, giving orders with the air of a proprietor.

He found him talking familiarly with his fishers and stone-masons. In spite of all that McNeil could say, the landlord of the McNeil hotel was on the most obsequiously familiar terms with him. Everywhere he turned, Maxwell's face or words, his carriage, his horses, or his yacht troubled him, — troubled him mainly because they were a direct pleasure to nearly every one but himself.

Outwardly, the laird made little sign. Only once did he suffer his private feelings to influence his sense of justice. Two of his fishers were seen by him in a state of pleased excite-

ment over Maxwell's chat with them. He could hear their laughter, and he suspected that Maxwell had been making ridicule of him, and that they were rehearsing the fun. He strode impetuously to them.

"Sandy Locke and James Begg, you can drop your nets and leave my boats instanter. I'll pay you your wage, and then you'll be free to serve the man you like best."

He knew he had made a mistake the moment he had spoken; but for nothing would he retract the words, and the men were sure of it. They took their money sullenly, and went to Maxwell, who turned their heads and set their tongues loose at both ends by his munificent reparation of McNeil's wrong.

"You should not have put a weapon in Maxwell's hand, McNeil," said Brodick.

"I would rather do that, Brodick, and know by the act that I have some natural feeling left; and I am not going to settle my feelings by square and rule, so you need not advise it. If I am pleased, I'll say so; if I am hurt, I'll show it."

But in days so haunted and vexed by petty personal worries, it was impossible for McNeil

to gather any mental strength. The fret and jar made his life's wheels move heavily. He was unhappy; and when he tried to analyze the sources of his discomfort, his temper suffered, and his magnanimity failed him from the very insignificance of his grievances.

One night, in a pitiful effort to make Brodick understand his trouble, and his shame at it, he fairly broke down, and covered his eyes with his large hands to hide the tears that amazed himself as much as if they had been a relief unknown before.

Brodick let him weep. He took no notice of an occurrence so sudden and surprising. These ancient tears, whose source lay so far back, would soften and harmonize and temper the angry man, would give relief to more thoughts than he knew of; for the small cares that contract our brows and drive away our smiles are precisely those which find no expression in tears, yet for which tears are often the best remedy.

But even in McNeil's most confidential talks with his friend, there was one subject he never named; the little slip of paper that Helen had given him. There it lay, a dead hope, a dead

trust, in the innermost room of his soul, in the innermost drawer of his desk. One night as he sat by the few sticks blazing on his lonely hearth, he was startled by a remembrance of it, so sudden and imperative that he trembled through all the depths of his spiritual nature.

Was it for this that God was striving with him, that he had lost Grizelda, that his enemy was permitted to triumph over him in every way? Was it this silent money in its hiding-place which was calling sorrow and humiliation unto him? He went to his bed full of such thoughts.

Oh, mystery of life! From what depths proceed thy comforts and thy lessons! At early dawn he awoke from a deep sleep in an indescribable awe. In a vision of the night he had visited that piteous home which Memory builds, and where only in sleep we can walk. Whom had he seen there? What message had he received? These things he never told.

But directly after breakfast he walked down to the manse. There had been a good brush of rain in the night, and everything had that damp freshness which is so delightful when there is sunshine and wind with it. The sea



was frilled and capped and a little rough. The rocks echoed with bouncing water as wave rolled after wave in torrent rapture.

He stood still a moment to watch them, or rather to watch the sea-pyots in their dainty black and white plumage breasting themselves as quietly on the tossing water as a hen sits on her nest.

The sight calmed him, and uplifted him also. He went into Brodick's presence ready to ask his counsel, but also ready to defend his own opinions. He told the minister of Helen's bequest; he went over the arguments which had hitherto quieted his conscience. He anxiously watched their effect on Brodick's face. He had a strong hope that he might think them reasonable.

But the table at which Brodick sat was not more undemonstrative than his face. For once he controlled himself absolutely until McNeil had fully finished his statement; then he said, —

“ I will take no responsibility in this matter, McNeil. It is between you and your conscience. If you give it, give it without grudging. Give it cheerfully. God loves a cheerful giver.”



"I thought you would tell me what to do."

"If you really want to know, shut yourself in your own room and think it out."

"It is a big sum, Brodick."

"It is; but maybe with the stupendous sacrifice of the Cross in your mind it will not look so big."

He went away sorrowful; and his first attempt to think out the subject was not in the line Brodick indicated. Helen had said, "Give the money to God's poor." He sought for an excuse in the very wording of the will.

God could take care of His own poor. He was not needing his help. And as for the Devil's poor, — the drunkards and wasters and idlers, — what justice would there be in helping them?

To this mood succeeded one of angry resistance. He would not be forced to give, at any rate. Not for fear, not for suffering of any kind, would he submit to what he bluntly called a superstition. If God saw well to afflict him, He was a just Judge, not one to be bought with a few thousand pounds.

When Brodick came up to the castle at night, he glanced at the laird with a quick, anxious

curiosity. McNeil caught the glance, and answered it fretfully: —

“No; I have not got any satisfaction from my session with myself, Brodick. I am doubting if there is a need of any special word. I can’t feel as if I was doing wrong, sir.”

“I was thinking after you left, McNeil, of the man who hid his talent in a napkin. Your desk drawer is very like it.”

“Nothing of the kind, Brodick. I have been using the siller to good purpose all along. Part of it is in the fishing-boats, and part in the new town, and the rest just here and there.”

“And you dinna feel as if you were trading with the Lord’s money for your own proper advantage?”

“All the gold in the earth is the Lord’s, for that matter. He gives and He takes. I’m not settled in my mind at all; I will wait and see what Colin says. He has both wisdom and some enthusiasm left; and he will look at both sides and hold the balance even. He will be here, I hope, — I surely hope, — in four days.”

“Yet I would give him a week, Laird.”

Brodick spoke slowly, and his eyes dropped. The laird had nothing more to say; he sat

silent, stooping forward with his hands outstretched to the blaze. Now and then he furtively glanced at Brodick, who appeared to be lost in some melancholy meditation.

Suddenly there was the sound of wheels, a murmur of voices in the distance; and as both men rose inquiringly to their feet, Colin opened the door.

They looked at him, speechless with wonder. His face was shining with the joy behind it; he walked, he spoke with the air of a man who brings glad tidings, almost too glad to be borne. He gave his hand to Brodick, but he put his arm around his uncle's neck and kissed him. It was a momentary touch of rapture, too great to last longer than a moment; but in it both McNeil and Brodick had been prepared for the amazing happiness at hand.

“Grizelda?”

It was all the father could ask.

“Grizelda is found. She is well. She is here. Grizelda!”

Then through the open door came a vision that might have come from heaven, — Grizelda and her child. The laird gave a loud cry. He would have fallen but for Colin's arms. He

would have fallen but that the next moment he felt Grizelda's kisses on his lips; her tears were washing his face, her voice calling him back to the full sensation of his blessed experience.

He sat down soon, but he kept her on his knee, and laid her cheek against his. He could say nothing but her name. Questions, conversation were as yet quite impossible to him. But, oh, when conversation came, when he heard the whole story, when he had talked with Peppo and Caterina, what words were there for his grief, his indignation, his delight over the retribution he clasped in his hand.

And what language can describe that joyful night! The hurried meal, in which every luxury within reach was put upon the table, the wild excitement of the servants, the rapture of the father, the beaming face of the minister as he tried to quiet the happy disturbance! Never in McNeil's memory of the past, never in all the days to come, would there be greater joy in McNeil Castle or greater reason for it.

Intentionally Colin had timed their arrival after dark. Until their own plans with regard to Maxwell were complete, it was better, it was indeed a necessity, to keep Grizelda's arrival

unknown. Peppo had first thought of this precaution, and it commended itself to every one concerned.

As soon, therefore, as McNeil could command himself, the exigency was explained to him. He saw it at once. He called every servant in the place, men and women, into his presence. They were all McNeils, and he reminded them of it.

"Rejoice with me," he said, as he went from one to another and gave them his hands, "rejoice with me. My daughter was lost, is found. My daughter was dead and is alive again!"

Then he explained to them the importance of secrecy and silence, and they looked into his face with a sympathy and intelligence that no oath could have strengthened. And until the dawn was pallid in the east they sat talking over the pitiful story. Its romance and wrong moved their Celtic natures to tears and lamentations and passionate anticipations of vengeance.

Peppo looked at the scene with critical amusement. The fumes of hot whiskey and the smoke of coarse tobacco, the tears and laughter were far too strong stimulants for his more in-

tellectual temper. He had a bottle of claret from the cellar, and found his cigarette, and Caterina with it, quite sufficient for his enjoyment of the situation.

"But I shall put an end to this affair very quickly, Caterina," he said. "We have ourselves to look after now, and this impertinent Maxwell must not delay us. I shall only have to speak to him. It is I that will do it all."

Brodick did not go back to the manse that night; indeed, the night was far advanced when the family separated, and even then McNeil felt sleep to be impossible. When all others had found it, he sat wide awake in his room, enjoying every moment of his anticipated meeting with Maxwell.

For all his wrongs and insults he was going to have full payment; and wonder of wonders, Grizelda was back in his home! He had his child again! Several times he rose and went softly into the corridor and looked at the door of her room; and when the dawn was white in the east, he heard Grizelda speaking to her child, and her voice made him tremble with joy.

"Do not talk, Archie, my darling! You might awaken grandfather!"

“Grandfather!” He had not thought of that before; he felt a new spring of love in his heart, and as he stood before the window, and the sunshine smote his wet eye-lids, and made a glory all about him, an amazing thought came into his mind.

With hasty steps he went down stairs into his parlour. He took from its hiding-place the slip of paper that had cost him so many uncomfortable hours. He let it lie in the palm of his hand, and looked bravely and tenderly at it. He thought of his restored child, of the loyalty of Colin, of his prosperous enterprises, of the enemy put under his feet. He thought of Helen; she was still the sweetest and dearest thought of his heart. He let the tears down fall upon the paper as he remembered her lovely life and the glad triumph of her dying words: “Oh, breadth! Oh, depth! Oh, boundless length! Oh, inaccessible height! Oh, Christ’s love!”

He raised the faded, yellow bit of paper to his lips. He kissed it with a great solemnity.

“Helen, sweet Helen! all you asked of me I will give, to the last farthing of increase; it shall go where you willed it.”



Without a thought of reservation, with all his soul he surrendered. In the moment of gift he resigned by an act of his mind every claim. He placed Helen's note now in his pocket-book; and before he had reached his sleeping-room again, he was considering, with his usual shrewd wisdom, how to expend it in the wisest possible manner.

"I have no skill in such investments," he said, quite seriously; "but Brodick and Mr. Selwyn have, and I will see that not a bawbee of Helen's money is wasted. Only one pleasure will I ask out of it, — I love my old college, and as God has not given me a son of my own, I will keep a lad there. As long as it stands I will keep a good lad there, — one that wants to learn, and has not the money to pay for his fees and his feed."

This resolution, so perfect, so final, so voluntarily and gratefully arrived at, gave him a singular peace and happiness. He washed, and then put on his finest clothing; nothing less seemed in keeping with the tone of his spirits. Though he had not even been in bed, he came down stairs like a giant refreshed. Brodick looked admiringly and inquisitively at him.



The change was so evidently that change which comes from the spiritual body, that he instantly suspected its cause.

He said softly to himself: —

“ McNeil has been visited. He has had one of thae glad times, when there is ‘a song in the night, when a holy solemnity is kept and gladness of heart.’ ”

## CHAPTER XVI.

### RETRIBUTION.

Run, spindles, run, and weave the threads of doom.

CATULLUS.

For the ills inflicted on men by the gods they must sustain ; but those involved in voluntary miseries, as thou art, on these it is not just for any one to bestow either pardon or pity.

SOPHOCLES.

Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest. Is. xxxvii. 29.

THE mental sympathy of clothing is far more widely felt than understood. Without any agreement on the subject, Colin also appeared in his best toilet, and Grizelda looked radiantly lovely in a rich costume of dark silk and velvet. The shrinking manner which had characterized her when last in her father's house, had given place to a noble serenity. For in the continual presence of people who are really indifferent to us, the soul learns wondrous self-reliances; and Grizelda had now that ease and

confidence of manner which can only come from a certainty of interior strength.

Brodict had gone to the village, but as they sat at breakfast he returned. "I have been making inquiries," he said; "Maxwell went away in his new yacht two days ago, his supposed wife with him. They will come in on the top of the tide in about an hour. I saw their carriage going down to the pier to meet them."

"Then we have no time to lose. Grizelda, put on your bonnet while I see to our own carriage. Colin, come with me. Doctor, be taking a cup of coffee till we join you. I hope the Italian and his wife will not keep us waiting."

Peppo entered with the words. He was in his Roman costume, but then it was of the most magnificent materials; and Caterina was in a glory of stripes and colour, and shining with chains and bracelets of gold.

All intense feeling is laconic. Perhaps we have not yet discovered words to interpret emotions that are soul deep. So it was a silent party that was driven rapidly over the moor dividing Edderloch from Blairgowrie.

At the gates, McNeil sent back the carriage. He did not wish to alarm Maxwell's servants before he had an opportunity to secure them. Fortunately, the gardeners were not in sight, and the approach of the McNeil party was unobserved by the house-servants who were lingering over a late breakfast.

McNeil's heavy knock at the main entrance recalled them to the idea of duty. The footman, who had a determination to be insolent to so early a caller, whoever it was, opened the door. At the sight of McNeil his face changed. McNeil laid his hand on his shoulder. He had known the man from his boyhood.

"Be whist, Glammis! Lady Maxwell, what are your orders now?"

Grizelda stepped forward, and, throwing off her cloak and bonnet, looked at the man. He recognized her in a moment; and white and speechless, sank into a chair.

"Listen, Glammis! We must have every servant in the house brought to this room. Laird Colin McNeil and myself will go with you to gather them. Brodick, you will stay with my lady and the strangers."

In a few minutes every man and woman

were under the laird's surveillance. He was determined that no one should have an opportunity to warn Maxwell; and when they were together, he told them such facts relating to the usage of Lady Maxwell as it was desirable should be known.

The words fell into ears quite ready for them. Lord Maxwell and his new wife had had sufficient time to make themselves hated by their household. Besides which, the vulgar mind loves something to wonder over. Had they been the best master and mistress in the world, they would not have found any pity. Every servant foresaw, not only a holiday, but a holiday with a sensation, — a sensation so great that it would serve them for a lifetime's gossip.

As the minutes went slowly by, the fitful conversation became a painful silence. The laird strode up and down the main hall, keeping guard upon the servants, whom he had placed in a parlour on one side of it. Grizelda sat in the opposite parlour; her face was still, but white as marble. Colin sat at her side and held her hand; Brodick stood at the window watching. His hands were clasped behind him; his face stern yet flushed with excitement. Cate-

rina was twirling her golden bracelets, smilingly content, and full of admiration for the splendid Peppo, whose dark eyes gleamed with wicked enjoyment, and who tip-toed about as if he felt himself to be the master of the ceremonies.

Suddenly Brodick turned from the window, saying, —

“He is here!”

The carriage was driven up to the door at full speed, and Maxwell came up the long flight of steps with a black frown on his face. He was so angry with Lady Julia that he did not, as was usually his custom, give her his arm; for she had made him wretched for two days. Her face was also cross and dissatisfied; for she had been sea-sick, and she had got her dress spoiled and her complexion burned, and she vowed she “would never, never go to sea again.”

And Maxwell's temper was increased by the closed door.

“What do those lazy dogs of servants mean?” he asked passionately.

They meant to permit him to knock at the door for entrance, and he did it with a force that frightened them.

In a moment Peppo had opened it, — Peppo,

gay and smiling, but with eyes full of hatred and a mouth cruel as death.

“Peppo!”

“Peppo, Milor’. Come in. I shall not hurt you—yet! And this is your new lady? *Per Baccho!* The old one was far more lovely.”

“Maxwell, who is this fellow?”

Livid and faint with terror, he could not answer Julia a word; and at the moment, McNeil flung wide the door of the room he was in and called with a might and a majesty which echoed through the whole house:—

“Grizelda! Grizelda!”

She answered the call ere it was past. She came like an avenging spirit before them. The sunshine poured in a flood of light behind her and set her in a radiance. For a moment, she stood silent and motionless, looking at the man who had sold her to Death.

The servants were crowding to the door of the room. McNeil beckoned them forward; he wanted witnesses of the criminal’s fear and abasement. Colin, Brodick, Caterina were all there. Maxwell lifted his eyes in terror and gazed at them.

Lady Julia was the first to stir the awful tab-

leau. She flew in a passion to her husband and touched him sharply.

"Who is that woman? Speak!"

"I thought she was dead, Julia, — before God, I did!"

"*Dio!*" cried Peppo, scornfully. "Madam, he gave me six hundred pounds to kill her! Milady Maxwell gave me a thousand pounds to save her alive. I have a tender heart."

"You are a devil!" answered Maxwell, recovering himself, and attempting to seize the supple Italian, who was instantly at McNeil's side.

"Lord Maxwell," said McNeil, "all your dastardly crime is fully discovered; there is not a link in the chain of evidence wanting. You are a felon, and a felon's life of degradation and labour is before you."

"And I! and I! — what am I?" cried Julia, wringing her hands.

Grizelda went to her.

"I am sorry for you. Surely you must have been deceived."

"I want not your pity. What am I, Maxwell? A woman without rights, without name, ruined for all my life! And my child! my child! wronged from his birth!"



"Julia, have pity on me! I never meant to wrong you. I sinned for your love."

"Pity! Love! I will hate you to the last breath I draw! Think how you have wronged me! In all your shameful deed the world will give me a part. They will say I knew it. I may be arrested! I may be taken to prison — tried like a common criminal! Oh! oh! oh!"

She fell to the floor with a shriek that was the only expression possible of the rage and hatred and terror that had her in its grasp.

There was a sudden rush toward the fallen woman; McNeil lifted her to a couch. When he turned to Maxwell, he had fled.

"Let him go, father," said Grizelda. "For my boy's sake let him go."

"Let him go, McNeil; his sin will find him out."

"Brodict, this vengeance is justly mine; I have suffered six years for it."

"Vengeance is God's own right. Be content, Laird, with the joy that God has sent to you."

Peppo listened to the conversation with interest. He had had the pleasure of terrifying Maxwell; he was now willing that he should

escape. His trial and punishment by law would be a tedious thing. He was already longing for Italy, and the money waiting there for him. He was well pleased when the decision was for that negative punishment which outlawry from all decent society, from home, wife, child, native land, and the privileges of his birth would inflict; and though the minister was a heretic, he felt a certain delight in Brodick's prediction:

“What if he escape human justice! The mark and the curse of Cain are on him! For the law is not always the hardest judge, — God has secret punishments of which the world knows nothing.”

The news spread like wild-fire over the hills and through all the surrounding villages; but Maxwell escaped before he had to meet it in his neighbours' faces. The dreadful interview had lasted but a few minutes; he found the horses still in his carriage, and he made the man drive him with furious haste to his yacht. The tide was turned, the wind was in his favour; before Julia had recovered consciousness, he was far out at sea with his shame and fear.

The captain and most of the crew had left the yacht. There were only himself and two men

on board; but they knew enough to carry her northward. Confusion, anguish, rage, despair went with him. He could neither eat nor drink nor sleep; he had no use for anything but thought. He looked as if hell was in his heart, and he in hell. Every moment some fresh, angry fiend of passion knocked at his memory, and bade it not be quiet.

A storm arose during the first night, and tossed the little ship hither and thither. He made no effort to save her. His two companions looked at him angrily and doubtfully. Something was wrong. They talked and wondered themselves into a superstitious dread of their employer.

As they scarcely knew how to manage the yacht, she was driven before the wind westward of Mull and Coll, and so up the Little Minch. A whole week passed in the changeable currents and winds of this stormy water-way, and Maxwell's first frenzy had become a dismal, sullen stillness. There was a stupid weight upon his senses; but he began to perceive from the looks of the men with him that they were dissatisfied and suspicious.

He called them into the cabin and told them

the lie that came most readily: On his return home he had found out something terrible about his wife. He could not live with her, and he hoped out at sea and in solitude to forget his shame, and find some way out of his trouble. Would they stay with him and help him?

Then the men remembered that Maxwell had been cross with his wife before she left the yacht; they were sorry for him, and reconciled to their peculiar voyage. Maxwell had some money with him; he proposed to double their wages, and they agreed with apparent cheerfulness to remain with him. But he felt that purposeless drifting depressed them; it would be better to decide upon some place and object. He took out his chart and considered it.

They had just passed Barr and were making for South Uist. He examined the lockers and stores, and concluded, as the provisions were running short, to make direct for Harris. He had once been with a shooting-party at Tarbet, and he resolved to make Harris his hiding-place.

He had guns on board, and powder and shot. He was thoroughly weary of the sea. He

could run the yacht into some quiet cove on the south of the island and lose himself for years, if he desired to do so, in the woody wilderness that still existed there.

He spoke to the men of his plan, and it pleased them. A return to Nature and the first principles of living finds an echo more or less strong in all hearts. The weather, though still wintry in that high latitude, would every day be growing warmer. A sort of Robinson Crusoe life was planned, and the two men looked forward to it with almost boyish delight.

At Taransay they bought some fine deer-hounds and other dogs necessary for sport, some materials for fishing, and a few rude cooking utensils for outdoor life. Their yacht was to be moored as a kind of store-house and also as a shelter in bad weather.

At this day, Maxwell would probably have been intruded upon in his wilderness; but then southern Harris was almost in a primeval condition. The great deer forests, the fine sea lochs running inland, and the little crofter townships on the coast were scarcely known to any one but the proprietor of the island and his factor. Maxwell was confident that he was

as practically cut off from the world as if he were in Central Africa.

He did not suffer much from fear of the law. He did not believe that Grizelda would permit her private life to be discussed by the public; he was equally sure that Julia would retire as quietly as possible with her shame and her wrongs. He was positive that Peppo had not come himself, and brought Caterina also, such a distance without a large sum of money, and equally positive that Peppo, having money, would be miserable unless he was spending it on the Roman Corso.

He arrived, therefore, readily enough at the conclusion which had really been come to. Grizelda's rights having been asserted and acknowledged, he would be permitted to live his own life if he never interfered with them. And as long as Julia lived, he felt that he must be an exile from everything he valued. For though he flattered himself that Grizelda would forgive him, he dared not take advantage of her clemency. If he did so, Julia's family would pursue him with an unrelenting hatred.

After all, as time went on he made himself very comfortable. In the green peace of the

Harris wilderness he was spending the summer very much to his mind. "In a few months," he reflected, "the hue-and-cry will be over. Nothing lasts in this world. Then I will go to Greece, and write to my lawyer and insist upon a proper allowance from my estates. Grizelda is sure to favour it. With, say, five thousand pounds a year, I can be very happy. Bah! I am only thirty-five years old; the world is all before me yet."

As he regained his confidence and his hopes, he regained, however, his arrogance and his ungovernable temper. At first the two sailors had been treated by him with that kind of good-comradeship which the circumstances seemed to warrant. They had never imposed upon it, and never forgotten that he was their employer; but when Maxwell began again his bullying abuse, his peremptory tone and manner, his reckless disregard of all created things but himself, they very quickly took refuge in a sullen indifference to his orders and long absences from his presence.

This state of things did not occur, however, until the summer was nearly over, and when he was almost careless as to whether they left him



or not. It would be easy in Tarbet to get men who were better sailors, and who would carry the yacht southward and into the direct way of meeting some of the large merchant ships leaving the ports of Greenock or Glasgow.

He was thinking over this plan one afternoon. The weather had turned chilly and damp; the men were tired of their holiday, and sitting gloomily apart, talking of their friends in Ederloch. In a week or two, the winter in all its fury might be upon them. Maxwell noticed that they looked toward the yacht as they talked. His suspicious nature instantly accused them of an intention to go off with it. But he did not give voice to his suspicions; he only showed the temper, otherwise controlled, by kicking violently out of his way a pet hound belonging to one of the men.

The dog's master flamed in a moment. Lutha was sick, he said; and if a man that called himself a gentleman wanted to kick brutes about, there were plenty of them around that were well enough to defend themselves.

But when it came to a matter of abuse, the sailors were dumb before the spirit they had raised. Maxwell could curse in half a dozen



languages at once, and the long habit of power was in his favour. He stormed them into a sullen calm, and then left them. A little later in the evening he kicked the dog again, and it bit him.

Then a terrible fight ensued, in which man and dog both did their worst. Maxwell would not permit his companions to interfere. He had a deer-knife on him, and after a demoniacal struggle he cut the dog's throat; but his own hands were severely torn by the brute's teeth. He washed them in running water, and determined with the morning's tide to take the yacht into Tarbet and have the wounds dressed; but when morning came there seemed to be no need of the northward journey, and a passionate longing to go south as quickly as possible was on him.

They began that day to prepare the yacht. Maxwell was in a feverish hurry, and the men were willing to humour him. But that night there came from the north a great storm; all of them were drenched through, and the next day all were sick and unable to move. A miserable two weeks passed, in which mutual reproaches did not help the racking chills and pains and

unavoidable wants of their condition. Then the sailors were well again, but Maxwell did not rally so quickly. He was so restless and fretful and passionate that the men looked fearfully at him. Had he really lost his senses? And might he do them some bodily harm?

They kept a watch over him, at the same time preparing the yacht for her voyage. At sundown one night she was ready for sea; and Maxwell gave orders to lift her anchor the next morning. One of the men rose early and made a cup of coffee. Maxwell sat on a camp-stool watching him; he looked miserable, his eyes were full of a dull fire, and wild as those of a hunted animal.

When the coffee was brought to him, he dashed it away, and threw himself on the ground in a paroxysm of strangulation and horror. He had a fit, and he came out of it with the knowledge in his heart of the awful fate waiting for him.

But he said to the men that he was subject to such fits, and ordered them to help him on board. The moment he heard the lap of the water on the beach, he had another paroxysm. To go to sea was now impossible. Every hour

of the day he grew worse. A night of indescribable terror was passed in that lonely wood. The two sailors were forced to hide themselves from their possessed master; but they heard, all through the dark midnight, shrieks and cries of a torment beyond humanity.

Early in the morning they stole away in the yacht, and put northward to Tarbet with all speed. No nearer help could be got. They ran away as if from the gates of hell; they did not dare cast a look behind them, but far over the lonely waters the wind brought them such awful echoes that their hearts fainted, and they covered their ears and prayed audibly as they went plunging, with every sail set, out of their hearing.

In the midst of a tempest they reached and yet hardly reached Tarbet; for the yacht struck a reef and had to be abandoned, and they were saved only by the skill and bravery of the coast fishermen. Their tale met with an instant pity; but what could be done? The storm was of unusual severity, the wind tore everything to ribbons, the rain came down in torrents, land travel was impossible, there was not a boat in harbour able to live in the sea outside.

It was ten days before the best men in Tarbet dared venture out on their humane errand. What could they hope to find? They only looked in each other's face for answer. When they arrived at the summer camp, the sun was shining and the sea-birds pluming themselves on the rocks; but the signs of the storm were everywhere. All traces of human life had been washed away; a tree had fallen across the place where their kettle had hung; great branches were scattered all over the forest, as if the powers of the air had used them as weapons. The rain must have equalled the wind, it had cut gullies for itself on every hand; the moss had become dangerous to walk on; the well-worn path to the sea, almost a morass.

They called the dogs, but none answered. They sought long for what they wanted ere it was found; then with low cries of horror and whispered prayers they turned their backs on the sight. That regard for the dead, which is among primitive peoples almost a piety, alone enabled them to pay what last duty it was possible to pay.

But they sought the dogs no more. Whether they were dead also, or whether they wandered

about the fastnesses of Chesham, no one could ever be induced to inquire.

But for many a year the pious fishers on this lonely coast used to say they heard from Renis Head to Taransay, long, weird, melancholy howls that filled all the spaces of land and sea with mournful clamour; and then they would talk in fearful whispers of the wretched soul that from its tortured body went forth in rack and tempest to its own place.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE LAIRD IS SATISFIED.

·   ·   ·   ·   ·   ·  
Say not the struggle naught availeth,  
The labour and the wounds are vain;  
For while the tired waves vainly breaking  
Seem here no painful inch to gain,  
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,  
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

CLOUGH.

A happy wedding as, I ween,  
The best of life's romances.

PETOFI.

NEVER within the memory of any living being in Knapdale had there been such an event as the Maxwell marriages to discuss; and never had there been so much visiting. Families long on terms of scant courtesy made friends over it. The affair was felt in a manner to touch every one's honour; for it was important to come to a proper decision as to which of the parties was to blame. If Lady Maxwell, then, of course, she could not be visited; if Lord Maxwell, then some degree of pitying courtesy might be granted.

Grizelda took her own place with an apparent calm indifference to public opinion; but she was in reality very susceptible, as any good woman is, and ought to be, to the criticisms of her neighbours. She wished to stand well with them. She had been so long isolated that she had a very natural craving for the companionship of her social equals. She was grateful to those ladies who called and gave her an opportunity to encourage their good-will.

Maxwell's sudden flight, and his cowardly desertion of Julia in the hour of her humiliation were universally condemned. Every man spoke of it, and every man felt himself to be immeasurably above and beyond such a dastardly deed. And it was noticeable that as each one explained the course he would have taken, the more chivalrous and impossible that course, the more positively it was asserted to be the only one which would have adequately met the situation. Nor was this sentiment altogether a false one. In great emergencies, men can do great things much more easily than small ones. A Rubicon may be crossed rather than some trifling social demand obeyed.

But it is characteristic of our age that nothing

lasts. The old nine days' wonder has dwindled down to at most thirty-six hours. Anything older is ancient history. Maxwell's memory was only kept alive by the uncertainty of his fate; and even this uncertainty became, in a week or two, a bore.

The hotel filled with guests, many of them remarkable ones; the villagers had their hands full, and were making money. The gentry had their houses full, and were giving entertainments. The person so foolish as to mention Maxwell was quickly made to feel that he had committed a social blunder. For even where there is the average kindness of heart, how soon people get over things! Which of us has a friend who has permanently suffered by his feelings? Which of us is not aware that, out of our immediate domestic relations, wife, husband, children, money matters, there is nothing we could not face with tolerable equanimity?

To Grizelda the summer went by happily. She almost felt as if it were wrong to be so happy; and yet this mental accusation of herself could never stand examination. She had no cause to give her husband regret. He had hated and tortured her; he had betrayed her



to Death, careless either of her honour or suffering. And in that last momentary meeting, when he had found his crime unaccomplished, he had glanced at her with the hatred of hell in his eyes. That he had run away from the shame and distress his passion had created was quite in keeping with the man's cruel, craven nature. She would have been astonished if he had remained by the side of his suffering partner.

For upon Julia Casselis fell the weight of the shameful position. When she recovered consciousness, twelve hours after Maxwell's flight, they were compelled to tell her that she had been deserted. She took the news as passionate women without self-restraint are sure to take an event full of sorrow and mortification. She upbraided God and man and destiny, her friends and her enemies alike. She refused all Grizelda's offers. She went into hysterics if she but heard her voice. She vowed she would not leave Blairgowrie, nor yet would she permit Grizelda under the same roof with her.

The situation was a trying one to the real mistress of the house. McNeil insisted upon

her resuming at once the rights which nothing had taken, or could take from her. As soon, therefore, as Julia had been carried to her bedroom, Lady Maxwell called together the household, and enrolled them anew in her service. All but Julia's personal maid accepted the change gladly. The latter was a London woman of the highest pretensions, and no offer was made to induce her to desert her mistress.

The Earl of Lauder was then written to. But some days must elapse before his arrival, and Grizelda explained this, through Julia's maid, to her. The rooms she had occupied at Blairgowrie were placed at her service until her friends came. Julia's temper would not permit her to accept them. As soon as she could control herself she ordered her effects to be packed, and in the mean time sent word to several of the families with whom she had been most intimate, of the strait she was in.

Unfortunately, in every case there was an insurmountable obstacle to her entertainment. One was just going away; another had every room full; a third had sickness in the house which might prove contagious. She could go to the hotel, but she dreaded the publicity; and

besides, it was in reality the McNeil Hotel. No roof of McNeil's should shelter her.

In this dilemma, Doctor Brodick offered the hospitality of the manse, and the lady accepted it. This relationship at once changed the good doctor's attitude. She was now his guest, and he busied himself for her comfort. He gave up his own room; he escorted her from Blairgowrie with respectful care, and soothed her passionate grief with that gentle forbearance and wisdom which, while hating the sin, deals pitifully and patiently with the sinner.

Still, he would listen to none of her tirades against Grizelda; and he upheld McNeil's course as the only proper course for a father to pursue. Equally just was he when her anger turned upon Lord Maxwell.

"My dear lady," he said, "you are alike in the fault. It is aye Eve that offers the temptation. If you had not been from the first mair kind than you ought to have been, there would not have followed blood-money and false marriage."

"Maxwell loved me from my childhood."

"There is no man, my lady, that will sin for a woman if she gives him neither recompense

nor hope. Why should he? Maxwell understood from you that if Grizelda were out of the way you would marry him; so he put Grizelda out of the way."

"I never uttered such a thought."

"There was no need of words. The eyes, the lips, the hands, the feet can speak. Oh! madam, no doubt you offered him the apple a thousand times."

"He loved me, and I loved him. We belonged to each other by ties stronger than those of marriage."

"Let me tell you, madam, there is no tie stronger than a promise to Almighty God. I myself heard that promise from Maxwell's lips when he took Grizelda McNeil to wife, and vowed to love and cherish her all his days."

"Then it was a cruel fate that threw us together afterward."

"Madam, sin is not the result of fate, or of any particular state of things. There is in the sinner an inherent weakness, and an openness to attack, which, sooner or later, would have led him or her into the same crime, whatever circumstances prevailed. The trouble is that sinners do not count the cost; they will not

see that sin and punishment grow out of one stem."

Such conversations as these, though maintained in the kindest spirit by the minister, did not please Julia; and she grew so impatient of her position that on the morning of the third day she left Edderloch, without any escort but that of her maid. She knew the hotel her Uncle Lauder would rest at in Glasgow, and she resolved to meet him there.

It was a great relief to every one when she departed. Already she had worn out what little popular sympathy was directed to her; and it was now every one's interest to be friendly with McNeil. He was left without a peer in Knapdale. Not only would he controul his own lands and enterprises, but it was most likely he would be appointed guardian of the young lord, and of Blairgowrie.

As the months went by, the conviction grew that Maxwell was dead. None of the advertisements, carefully worded to his circumstances and needs, had been answered, though inserted in the principal papers of all countries likely to be his retreat. No one had seen the yacht. It had put into no port; it had not been met

by any incoming or outgoing vessel. The two sailors whom he took with him had never returned. It was remembered that there had been a severe storm the first night after the flight, and every one believed that the yacht and all on board had gone to the bottom of the sea.

But with the return of the spring, the men who had accompanied Maxwell, came back to Edderloch. They had been caught by the winter when they were without money, in Harris, and had remained in Tarbet, doing such work as they were able to find, until the fine weather enabled them to obtain a passage home on the early trading-boats. They went at once to the minister with the news of Maxwell's death, and to him they spared none of its dreadful details.

Brodick was profoundly impressed; he was almost terrified at the verification of his own prophecy.

"The words came from the Lord," he said, "and I am His servant. The message He gives me, shall I not deliver it?"

Yet as he softly paced his room to the tumult of his thoughts, a great pity for the miserable man came over him. That impulse to pray for the dead, which every heart has felt to be

deeper than creed and stronger than reason, made him suddenly pause, and, with clasped hands, raise his eyes to heaven; and though his lips moved not, his soul recalled, like flashes of light, the promises of God's everlasting mercy.

Into this strife of feeling and reason came the laird. He brought into the study the freshness of the spring, the atmosphere of primroses and cuckoos, and the gurgling of fresh water-courses. Brodick's face was like an open book to him. He was accustomed to read the man's inmost thoughts there; and he said, before the minister could speak: —

“What strange thing has happened?”

“Maxwell is dead.”

“Now, God be thanked!”

“Laird!”

“Yes! God Almighty be thanked for the word! When the wicked cease from troubling, it is good reason for thanking Him.”

“He died a dreadful death.”

“He lived an ill life, which is in itself a kind of death. To go before God with one's hands bloody! How terrible that must be, Brodick. What came to him?”



He listened with a shocked face to the story. He had nothing further to say. Maxwell had been judged by a Power whose awards were beyond human criticism. But as the two men sat silent they were both feeling how necessary it was to take steps at once to verify the report, and to prepare for the future it entailed.

It was not considered necessary to tell Grizelda the manner of her husband's death.

"The yacht struck a reef off Harris," Colin said to her. "The two men with him were saved, and have returned. Lord Maxwell is no more."

She made no further inquiry. For a few days she was exceedingly still, and the laird noticed, with a little private anger, that her eyes looked as if she had been weeping; then she assumed the widow's mourning garments, for though they were but a dismal form, yet society has certain demands which no one is entitled to despise. The black dress and the band of white crape round her head were, however, to McNeil the livery of freedom and joy. He liked to see her in them; they were in his eyes far more of festival robes than the snowy satin and sparkling jewels of her bridal day.



The whole of the summer was much disturbed by this event. Maxwell's lawyer, accompanied by the two men who had been the dead lord's last companions, went back to Harris and removed the remains to the family vault in Galloway. Brodick went with them. The laird asked him no questions on his return, and the only remark the minister made referred to the funeral rites.

"It was an Episcopal clergyman who conducted them," he said. "There is something for us to learn, McNeil, from their service. Our silent gathering at the grave-side has no audible voice of tenderness or hope. The English Church never forsakes her dead as long as they are in the upper air; she waits for her last solemn farewell at the grave."

The young Lord Maxwell's affairs were not so easily settled. Having been born on foreign ground and in seclusion, it was necessary to prove his identity and his parentage. But Grizelda had always kept this emergency in view, and prepared for it; so that the only difficulty lay in the direction of summoning her witnesses.

About this business it was necessary for Colin to go again to Rome. The Donatas were

pleased at the prospect of a visit to a country they had long wished to see. Peppo, in view of certain tangible profits, was not averse to it; and he brought not only Caterina to Scotland, but such other peasants as had been familiar with Grizelda during her stay with Caterina.

Peppo was found in a house which he had bought, about sixteen miles from Rome; the very finest house in the village, of which he was now a most prominent resident. He was filling an office very similar to a justice of peace, and filling it with a moral severity which was the admiration of the pious, and the terror of those who came for judgement before him. For Peppo was very sensitive to the admiration of his fellows. His surroundings were those of morality and religion; and he took the lead in them as easily as he had taken in Rome the lead among the class noted for their light fingers and easy virtues. His farm was prospering, his vineyard doing well; Caterina was the most obedient of wives, and Peppo the most satisfied of mortals.

But Grizelda felt even this passing invasion of her old life a great trial. There are friends raised up for certain emergencies, who are

best kept only in kindly memory after the emergency is over. They leave upon the mountain-tops of the past a lovely light, but they do not fit into any future circumstances of life. Grizelda felt this with regard to her Roman friends. She must always remember them with affection and gratitude, but they could only bring memories which had no part in her happier existence.

So she was not sorry when all the forms and demands of the law were satisfied, and they could depart. The Donatas went away with hearts full of pleasure in their new experiences. Peppo had a slip of paper in his pocket-book which satisfied all his expectations. Caterina had many new dresses and ornaments, — every one, indeed, took back with him something to brighten the rest of his years.

As had been universally prophesied, McNeil was united with Grizelda in the guardianship of the young lord and his estates. And gradually

“The tumult of the time disconsolate,  
To inarticulate murmurs died away,”

and Grizelda's life settled into that calm, methodical order which is the sweetness as well as the saltiness of our days. A governess was en-

gaged for young Archibald, who proved also an excellent companion for Grizelda, and Colin was a great deal of his time at Blairgowrie. There was always some business to attend to, and he appeared to enjoy being his uncle's deputy.

After the term of her seclusion was over, Grizelda began to entertain her neighbours, to visit, and to travel a little. On the bread of bitterness she had grown to a woman's noblest stature; and her patient, pious soul had imparted to her beautiful body an air of noble serenity and candour that was exceedingly charming. McNeil watched her with a constantly increasing love and admiration. Colin was her worshipper long before he was aware of the power she had over him.

So the pleasant months, summer and winter, summer and winter, went by. All were happy in the present, and no one was so foolish, so

"O'er exquisite

As to cast the fashions of uncertain evils"

for the future. The laird, indeed, allowed himself to worry a little because a certain good thing which he longed for was unaccountably delayed by the indecision of those who might so easily gratify him.

For he saw plainly that Colin was deeply in love with Grizelda; and as far as he could judge, Grizelda was in love with Colin. It was the natural thing, the suitable thing for both. Then why did they not say so? He never took into consideration the numerous shadowy impediments to its own bliss which love delights in inventing. He could not understand why Colin and Grizelda should like to find their desire by a labyrinth, instead of by a straight road. Ah! it takes youth to understand that the labyrinth is, after all, the nearest way.

One lovely Sabbath night there had been a great preaching on the hills. Brodick had said words to the gathered thousands which sent them away solemnly happy. Some were singing in their boats to the measured throb of their oars as they rowed home in the glorious moonlight; others were seeking their cots in the hollows of the hills. Brodick and McNeil walked together. The meeting had been near Blairgowrie, and they agreed to call there and take supper with Grizelda.

They entered the beautiful grounds. The odours of lilies and lilacs made the place like a shrine. The silence that was in the starry

sky, the sleep that was among the lonely hills, the glory that was in the mellow moonshine were influences that were irresistibly sweet and tender. The fragrance made them stand still to wonder over it.

As they did so, Colin and Grizelda came out of the lilac walk. She was clothed in white, and in the enchanting atmosphere looked like an angel at Colin's side. He bent to her, he drew her to his heart, he kissed her uplifted face.

The old men turned silently away, as if they had been guilty of a profanation. Their eyes were wet, and yet their hearts were full of happiness. McNeil was dreaming of Grizelda in her own home again,—of Grizelda the beloved wife of Colin; of Grizelda's sons and daughters filling the old rooms with life, and convoying him to the grave with their young arms around him.

Brodict had a vision of his own youth; of the days when he had wooed his lost wife on the hills of Aranteenie; of his joyful tryst she had given him when dying upon the hills of God. His strong face was as tender as a child's.

"McNeil," he said, "it is a wonderful story, this old story of love! It is as fresh to-night

in the garden of Blairgowrie as it was in the Garden of Eden."

"I am a happy man, Brodick."

Over the moonlit moor, in the solitude and silence of the exquisite night, the two walked in gladness of heart. Their tall, massive figures had a grave majesty; they carried with them the air of those men who lived when the world was young, when angels walked the earth not unseen, and God himself talked with Abraham, calling him "*My Friend*."

THE END.







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